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APPROACHES TO BLACK POWER: AFRICAN AMERICAN GRASSROOTS
POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN CLEVELAND, OHIO, 1960-1966

A Dissertation Presented

by

DAVID M. SWIDERSKI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2013

W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies

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APPROACHES TO BLACK POWER: AFRICAN AMERICAN GRASSROOTS
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ABSTRACT

APPROACHES TO BLACK POWER: AFRICAN AMERICAN GRASSROOTS POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN CLEVELAND, OHIO, 1960-1966

SEPTEMBER 2013

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Black communities located in cities across the country became sites of explosive political unrest during the mid-1960s. These uprisings coincided with a period of intensified political activity among African Americans nationally, and played a decisive role in expanding national concern with black political struggle from a singular focus on the Civil Rights movement led by black southerners to consider the “race problem” clearly present in the cities of the North and West. Moreover, unrest within urban black communities emerged at a time when alternate political analyses of the relationship between black people and the American state that challenged the goal of integration and presented different visions of black freedom and identity were gaining considerable traction. The most receptive audience for these radical and nationalist critiques was found among black students and cadres of militant, young black people living in cities who insisted on the right to self determination for black people, and advocated liberation through revolution and the application of black power to secure control over their communities as the most appropriate goal of black political struggle.

The following study examines grassroots political organizations formed by black people in Cleveland, Ohio during the early 1960s in order to analyze the development of the tactics, strategies, and ideologies that became hallmarks of Black Power by the end of the decade. These developments are understood within the context of ongoing political struggle, and particular attention is paid to the machinations of the multifaceted system of racial oppression that shaped the conditions against which black Clevelanders fought. This struggle, initially aimed at securing unrestricted employment, housing, and educational opportunities for black people, and curtailing episodes of police brutality against them, culminated in five days of unrest during July 1966. The actions of city officials, especially the Mayor and members of the Cleveland Police Department, during the Hough uprising clarified the nature of black oppression in Cleveland, thereby illuminating the need for and uses of both the formal political power of the ballot, as well as the power of the bullet to defend black people and communities through the force of arms.

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INTRODUCTION

BLACK STUDIES AND BLACK POWER

The history of black political struggle during the 1960s is being rewritten. Inaugurated by the recent publication of articles, monographs, and edited collections that collectively constitute what has been called the “new Black Power Studies,” that much maligned facet of mid-twentieth-century black political struggle has lately enjoyed something of a renaissance. New works have deepened our understanding of local struggles and advanced nuanced interpretations of the Black Power movement nationally. Central to this process of historical revision has been an interrogation of the relationship between the Black Power movement and other facets of black political struggle during the mid-twentieth century, especially the Civil Rights movement, in order to move beyond the now outdated good/evil dichotomy that pervaded much of the early the scholarship on the period to the detriment of both scholarly and popular understanding.¹

¹ A representative sample of the new Black Power Studies includes: Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and the American Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights, and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, ed., *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights–Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, ed., *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Charles Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2006); Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights–Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004); Christopher B. Strain, *Pure Fire: Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, ed., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); and Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

In the first place, new scholarship has challenged the conventional periodization of the Civil Rights/ Black Power movements, contending that many of the things regarded as hallmarks of Black Power: a radical (that is, anti-capitalist) political stance; a reliance on arms for self-defense and/or resistance in response to white violence; programs aimed at fostering community control of local resources and institutions; a conception of Black people in America as a nation within a nation, or an internal colony of the United States that formed part of a transnational “Bandung world”; to name but a few, had been present and active long before the Meredith March of 1966 when the slogan “Black Power!” reached a white audience in numbers, and the Black Power movement was, according to the conventional periodization, supposed to have begun.

Additionally, this re-periodization has brought to light a network of heretofore unheralded leaders, participants, and campaigns working to advance the goal of black liberation (which did not particularly include integration into the mainstream of white, middle-class America) by means other than those associated with the Civil Rights movement, even as they began their work during the late 1950s and early 1960s along side it. Another, related, benefit of the new scholarship on Black Power and its emphasis on local figures has been increased attention on the role of Black women as leaders and participants in shaping the programmatic thrust of black political struggle, in checking the hyper-masculine impulses projected by some of the male leaders of several Black Power organizations, and in developing a vision of how life would be renewed—gender relationships balanced, families healed, schools strengthened, scourges like drug-use and

crime reduced or eliminated, and so on—in liberated Black communities.

Lastly, the new scholarship has considered the relationship between the Black Power movement and the international liberation struggles of people of color then taking place around the globe—and especially in Africa—as former colonies gained independence from the old empires of Europe. A major part of the identity reformation that took place among black people in the United States during the 1960s involved recognizing a cultural and political kinship between themselves and their struggles “in the belly of the beast,” and those of their counterparts on the African continent and throughout the formerly-colonized world. From this perspective, all of these “darker nations,” including the Black nation of African-descended people in the United States, were compelled to confront the rising specter of neocolonialism following the reinvigoration of global capitalist imperialism led by the United States in the post-War era.

The added depth and dimension introduced by the new scholarship on Black Power are particularly relevant to the field of Black Studies because they succeed in presenting an interpretation of America that counters the prevailing Eurocentric master narrative of American history by refracting the American experiment through the prism of the black experience. Seen in this light, what America has done or, as importantly, has failed to do, matters more than what America has claimed, and still claims, to be in its founding documents and public political discourse. In other words, the perspective that emerges from taking seriously the core political critique of Black Power allows one to view America in the full light of its history of racial oppression, and to consider the

substantial legacy of that history—something which no white person (or any so-called “traditional” academic field formed and shaped by the perspectives and interests of white people living in a highly racialized social system) has ever been forced to do by the racial dynamics of American society, and which far too few whites have chosen to do voluntarily. For black people in America, by contrast, this history has been unavoidable, and its illumination has been a central mission of Black Studies. Writing as though the white experience and its attendant social perspective were neutral ground, the first generation of white historians of the Civil Rights/Black Power era, as with many white participants in the Civil Rights movement, no matter how well intentioned, too often imposed their vision for black freedom on black people and tried to delimit the appropriate means by which it might be achieved.

The rising chorus among black people in the 1960s for liberation by whatever means necessary, including armed struggle and revolution, was interpreted by the first generation of professional historians of Civil Rights/Black Power as the thing that brought the assumed racial progress achieved by the Civil Rights movement to a halt. By alienating liberal whites and destroying the grand coalition responsible for the legislative victories of that movement, while simultaneously antagonizing conservative whites and providing a convenient justification for intensified harassment and repression by the FBI, state governments, and local law enforcement agencies, the more aggressive strains of Black power rhetoric, ideology, and action have been held accountable for derailing efforts at social reform during the 1960s. Individual leaders like Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and Stokley Charmichael, or later Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Angela

Davis have certainly been singled out as culpable in this regard, but it was the series of uprisings in urban Black communities that swept the nation during the second half of the 1960s that has most often been presented as the watershed moment of transition when Black Power eclipsed—and began to destroy—Civil Rights.

The survival and growth of the field of Black Studies, along with the new scholarship on Black Power, have together contributed enough momentum to effectively neutralize the ideological underpinnings of this initial critique of the legitimacy of the Black Power movement and its political theory and practice. Yet, the uprisings in Black urban communities and their relationship to the Black Power movement have so far remained understudied. The few exceptions have focused almost entirely on what we might think of as the big three uprisings: Watts in 1965, and Newark and Detroit in 1967.² Very recently, scholars have produced a number of articles, dissertations, and monographs focused on the local black political struggles in specific communities (other than the big three) in which an uprising occurred.³ Apart from these case studies, some valuable work, now quite old, was done in the wake of the uprisings, resulting in several volumes which sought to analyze those events collectively, and to link them to a long

² Among the several works on Detroit is Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989); Newark is covered in Tom Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark: Official Violence and Ghetto Response* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), as well as Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*. Gerald Horne, *The Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995) considers Los Angeles.

³ These include Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights, and Black Power in Philadelphia*; Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America* (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2010); Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*; Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, ed., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*; and Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (New York: Brandywine Press, 2000).

tradition of black protest against economic exploitation, political marginalization, white violence, and other forms of racist injustice.⁴

In addition to the proto-Black Studies and new Black Power studies scholarship on the uprisings, a torrent of academic work came pouring out of sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, urban studies, and even geography departments around the country following the publication of the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (better known as the Kerner Commission). This social science scholarship aimed primarily to either confirm or challenge the conclusions of the Kerner Commission which rooted the cause of the uprisings in the economic exploitation and political powerlessness that shaped the social conditions for many black urban residents whose communities were forced into segregated, blighted neighborhoods (black ghettos) by the machinations of American racism. The increasing regularity and mounting intensity of black urban uprisings during the mid-1960s apparently caught much of white America by surprise. One sociologist speaking for his profession after the most turbulent years of the late 1960s admitted to being “uninformed about some things that social scientists should know.”⁵ Among those things, judging by the sociological studies of the uprisings that followed, were the answers to the first two questions

⁴ Works that make an effort in this direction include Rodney F. Allen and Charles H. Adair, eds., *Violence and Riots in Urban America* (Worthington, Ohio: C. A. Jones Pub. Co, 1969); Floyd B. Barber, ed., *The Black Power Revolt* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1968); Robert M. Fogelson, *Violence as Protest : A Study of Riots and Ghettos* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971); James A. Geschwender, ed., *The Black Revolt: The Civil Rights Movement, Ghetto Uprisings, and Separatism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Allen D. Grimshaw, ed., *Racial Violence in the United States* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969); Tom Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark: Official Violence and Ghetto Response* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Nathan Wright, Jr., *Black Power and Urban Unrest: Creative Possibilities* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967); Richard P. Young, ed., *Roots of Rebellion: The Evolution of Black Politics and Protest Since World War II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

⁵ Jack H Curtis, “Review of Supplemental Studies for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,” *Social Forces* 48, no. 3 (December 1970): 418.

President Lydon Johnson asked the Kerner Commission to address, namely: What happened during the uprisings?, and Why did the uprisings happen? Armed with research drawn from the investigations of the Kerner Commission as well as data sets compiled by the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence, sociologists engaged in an all-out pursuit of the question of causality, which became the primary focus and driving force of the bulk of sociological “riot” studies. All manner of hypotheses were considered. Everything from the size of a city, the size of the Black population in that city, the geographic location of a city, the form of municipal government in a given city, the size of the police force in a given city, the history of racial violence or turmoil in a city, the process of ghetto formation in a given city, the level of racial segregation in a city, the level and concentration of poverty in the Black community of a given city, and many variables besides were tested to determine their role in causing or facilitating the uprisings.⁶ A smaller number of studies, focused on the ancillary question of how to best suppress an

⁶ The scholarship here is quite voluminous. Among the most prolific scholars on these questions were: Harlan Hahn, “Violence: The View From the Ghetto,” *Mental Hygiene* 53, no. 4 (October 1969): 509–512; “Civic Responses to Riots: A Reappraisal of Kerner Commission Data,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (April 1970): 101–107; “Cops and Rioters: Ghetto Perceptions of Social Conflict,” *The American Behavioral Scientist* 13, no. 5/6 (August 1970): 761–780; “Black Separatists: Attitudes and Objectives in a Riot-torn Ghetto,” *Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 1 (September 1970): 35–53; “A Profile of Urban Police,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 36, no. 4 (October 1971): 449–466; “Ghetto Assessments of Police Protection and Authority,” *Law & Society Review* 6, no. 2 (November 1971): 183–194; and Harlan Hahn and Joe Feagin, “Riot-Precipitating Police Practices: Attitudes in Urban Ghettos,” *Phylon* (1960-) 31, no. 2 (June 1970): 183–193; and Seymour Spilerman, “The Causes of Racial Disturbances: A Comparison of Alternative Explanations,” *American Sociological Review* 35, no. 4 (1970): 627–649; “The Causes of Racial Disturbances: Tests of an Explanation,” *American Sociological Review* 36, no. 3 (1971): 427–442; “Structural Characteristics of Cities and the Severity of Racial Disorders,” *American Sociological Review* 41, no. 5 (1976): 771–793. This scholarship has been kept alive by more contemporary work like Gregg Lee Carter, “In the Narrows of the 1960s US Black Rioting,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1986): 115–127; “The 1960s Black Riots Revisited: City Level Explanations of Their Severity,” *Sociological Inquiry* 56, no. 2 (September 1986): 210–228; “Local Police Force Size and the Severity of the 1960s Black Rioting,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1987): 601–614; and “Black Attitudes and the 1960S Black Riots: An Aggregate-Level Analysis of the Kerner Commission’s 15 Cities Data,” *Sociological Quarterly* (1990): 269–286; as well as, Daniel J. Myers, “Racial Rioting in the 1960s: An Event History Analysis of Local Conditions,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 1 (1997): 94–112; Daniel J. Myers and B. S. Caniglia, “All the rioting that’s fit to print: Selection effects in national newspaper coverage of civil disorders, 1968–1969,” *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 4 (2004): 519–543.

uprising after it broke out, were subsequently conducted as well.⁷ Conspicuously absent from many of the sociological “riot” studies was an investigation and analysis of the perspectives of the people in whose community the uprising occurred (beyond the narrow question of how the residents of black ghettos viewed violence), or any serious attempt to understand the uprisings in the political context of the mid-to-late 1960s.

The sociological “riot” studies were, however, accompanied by the rise of urban anthropology and the examination of daily life in urban black communities. As with sociologists, scholarly knowledge of the conditions of everyday life for black city-dwellers, along with an understanding of their desires, motivations, and frustrations, was commonly lacking among white anthropologists (and white people generally) who responded by producing a series of ethnographic studies of urban black communities.⁸ While topically related to earlier studies of urban black communities produced by black sociologists, from Du Bois’s seminal *The Philadelphia Negro* through Drake and Cayton’s magisterial *Black Metropolis*, and building directly on Kenneth Clark’s study of Harlem, *Dark Ghetto*, many urban anthropologists of the 1960s and 1970s lacked a genuine sense of connection with the people and places they sought to live among and study, and the value of the works they produced is in several cases compromised by “the search for otherness” that motivated a number of white anthropologists to study urban

⁷ Taking the lead here were Rex Applegate and Morris Janowitz. See, for example, Rex Applegate, *Crowd and Riot Control, Including Close-combat Techniques for Military and Police* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Company, 1964), and Morris Janowitz, *Social Control of Escalated Riots* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Center for Policy Study, 1968).

⁸ Roger D. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle...: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, 1964); Elliot Liebow, *Tally’s Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1967); Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). Harold M. Rose, *The Black Ghetto: A Spatial Behavioral Perspective* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971); Dan Rose, *Black American Street Life: South Philadelphia, 1969-1971* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

black communities in the first place.

A related body of scholarship that is less strained by distance, and is, in fact, an outgrowth of the urban sociology pioneered by Du Bois and broadened by the Chicago school, comprises the historical studies of black ghetto development which examined the establishment and growth of, as well as the changes within, segregated black communities in the industrial cities of the Northeast, Midwest, and West coast that in the 1960s became centers of revolt.⁹ While these studies do not focus on the uprisings themselves, they do provide crucial insight into ways in which the racial, economic, and political dynamics of a given city informed the creation and transformation of urban black communities and their consolidation into isolated ghettos during the first half of the twentieth century. As such, these works do much to reveal the process by which the stage for rebellion was set, as it were, by the 1960s.

While the collection of social science scholarship outlined above is vast and varied, several generalizations can be made about its collective shortcomings. In the first place, many of the social science studies suffer from the limitations imposed by an ideological stance analogous to that which hampered the insights of the first generation of historians who studied the Civil Rights/Black Power movement. With few exceptions, the social science scholarship accepted the conventional (and conservative) political classification of the uprisings as riots without much scholarly debate. Moreover, these

⁹ Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); John H. Bracey, August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, eds., *The Rise of the Ghetto* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1971); Richard J. Meister, ed., *The Black Ghetto: Promised Land or Colony?* (Lexington MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1972); David M. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 1976).

studies frame the question of violence during urban uprisings almost exclusively in terms of the actions of the black people who participated in the unrest which, despite frequent rumors of sniper activity, was limited to property destruction and expropriation. The personal violence committed against black people by members of law enforcement agencies and white vigilantes is largely ignored, while the longstanding patterns of routine police brutality are frequently dismissed as something that black people believe themselves victims of rather than a matter of established, demonstrable fact. The sociological riot studies are further hampered by a lack of sustained political analysis of the uprisings and their relationship to the political climate of the 1960s, despite the fact that the connection between the uprisings and the political ideas and actions of black Americans in the 1960s was indeed the subject of rather contentious debate among intellectuals, activists, and government officials at the time—and particularly among those involved in, or in opposition to, the Black Power movement. As noted above, what little has been done in this regard came out of the burgeoning field of Black Studies and has only recently received renewed scholarly attention with the renaissance of Black Power studies. The need for scholarship that analyzes the development of black political struggle in urban communities during the 1960s, that considers the uprisings in the context of that development, and that provides a more nuanced analysis of the violence committed during the uprisings, including especially the violent actions of police forces, therefore remains, and it is the goal of this study to help fill that need.

In taking up that task, this dissertation will focus on one location, Cleveland, Ohio, as a case study. While comparative studies present the possibility for a broader

understanding of complex social phenomena like the urban uprisings or the Black Power movement than can be deduced from a case study, the power of their impact ultimately rests on the availability of data for a number of cities, as well as the time to thoroughly analyze each city individually and then compare the results. In other words, case studies of specific localities have to exist before a useful comparative analysis can be undertaken. As of now, such studies (a slight few in their own right) are, as noted above, almost entirely limited to the uprisings in Watts, Newark, and Detroit. And while they are a start, these three uprisings represent but a fraction of the total number of uprisings in urban black communities in the 1960s. If we are to develop a sophisticated understanding of the uprisings and their relationship to the politics of the Black Power era, then we need to build from the ground up. We need to follow the lead of the new Black Power studies which have broken the Black Power movement down into its component parts for closer examination. We need to embrace the local. The validity of any comprehensive, synthetic understanding of the uprisings must be built on a collection of studies each of which deeply interrogates the events, organizations, leaders, and community members, as well as the political dynamics, economic conditions, and opposition active in one location. Enough of these studies have not yet been done, so we must start there.

Since there are literally hundreds of cities in which uprisings occurred, the choice to focus on Cleveland, Ohio is in some sense arbitrary. There are, however, a number of factors that make Cleveland a particularly suitable city in which to study the relationship between the uprisings and the development of Black Power politics. In the first case, Cleveland was home to two events that the existing scholarship calls riots (despite the

fact that the circumstances of each are quite different except in superficial ways—black people did indeed threaten the established social order in both cases, and in both cases they were met by the force of the state). As such there is a chance for comparison within the case study. The debate about the appropriate name for these events—whether riots, rebellions, civil disorders, civil violence, collective violence, uprisings, or some other term is preferable for describing them—has been hampered by the political perspectives held by individual commentators and by the lack of specific knowledge about a group of related happenings (the uprisings) which has subsequently led to the tendency to generalize and label all by the same term without acknowledging that the conditions of each varied considerably. Such variation is plainly obvious between the 1966 uprising of the black community in the Hough neighborhood of Cleveland, and the 1968 events in the nearby Glenville neighborhood that began as a fire fight between a small band of young, militant black men and Cleveland police officers. To describe both events with one term is a reduction that confuses more than it clarifies, and to call both events riots is to delegitimize the array of black political behavior that manifested outside the realm of electoral politics or civil rights protest.

In addition to the possibility of comparing two different uprisings and their relationships to each other, Cleveland has a number of other key aspects which attract scholarly attention where Black Power politics are concerned. Among these is the election of Carl Stokes as mayor in 1967. The debate over what constituted Black Power that raged in the heat of the moment has carried over to the study of that era today. During the sixties, black organization and participation in electoral politics was promoted

as the (or at least the first) legitimate expression of Black Power by Stokely Charmichael and other early Black Power advocates who had cut their political teeth as field organizers registering black southerners to vote in the early 1960s. The formation of independent black-controlled political parties in the South like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), and later the election of black mayors in northern cities—including Stokes in Cleveland—were heralded as evidence of the promise for change offered by this approach to Black Power. Cleveland, then, offers the possibility of another comparison between the pursuit of Black Power through electoral politics represented by the election of Stokes, and the more rebellious expressions of black protest in Hough in 1966, as well as the manifestly militant insistence on black liberation through armed struggle displayed in Glenville in 1968 that bookend Stokes's election. The presence of several local, militant, black-led or all-black organizations including the Afro-American Institute, the Cleveland chapter of CORE, the Medgar Evers Rifle Club, the JFK (that is: Jomo Freedom Kenyatta) House, the AfroSet, and the Republic of New Libya that espoused black nationalist ideology or engaged in actions associated with Black Power (in some cases organizing both in support of the uprisings and the election of Stokes), invite additional points of comparison between the multiple manifestations of Black Power politics and ideology in Cleveland.

This is all the more important since the attempts made by Cleveland officials to understand what had caused the Hough uprising (a process many black Clevelanders criticized as disingenuous from the outset) were frustrated by the adoption of a

conceptual framework of urban unrest that had itself been shaped by the debate between intellectuals, media members, and national political leaders of divergent political persuasions, and seemed to offer only two possibilities: 1) the conservative position that the *riots* resulted from the subversive influences of black nationalists, communists, or other radical elements in the communities where they happened; or, 2) the liberal position that the *disorders* resulted from the desperate frustration that characterized the lives of black ghetto residents whose circumstances were marked by poverty and powerlessness. A third explanation, that the *rebellions* portended the coming of a black revolution, was subsequently advanced by some Black Power advocates. A more satisfying analysis of the forces involved in producing the uprisings and their connection to each other is sorely needed if we are to untangle the relationship between those uprisings, the motivations (political and otherwise) of the participants therein, the interpretations of their meaning (political and otherwise) rendered by the local observers thereof, and the political ideology and rhetoric advanced by Black Power groups actively organizing in the communities in which they occurred, in order to deepen our understanding of the political dynamics operating in the U.S. during the Black Power era. The growth of indigenous, black militant organizations, along with the emergent expressions of black political activity in Cleveland during the 1960s, especially those which erupted between the beginning of the decade and the 1966 uprising in Hough, provide an especially useful context in which to examine these dynamics.

In addition to reasons of political circumstance, Cleveland offers itself as an attractive cite of inquiry into these matters because of an accident of history that resulted

in the production of a critically important source for research. In its infancy and formative years, the United States Commission on Civil Rights conducted a series of hearings in Black communities beginning in 1957 and continuing into the early 1970s in order to investigate “denials of equal protection of the laws by reasons of race with respect to housing, education, employment, health, welfare[,] and police community relations.” Essentially fact finding missions intended to pass along information about conditions on the ground to the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, the CCR hearings collectively constitute thousands of pages of testimony offered by the people who lived in the areas where uprisings occurred throughout the decade. The conditions of privation and hardship to which the uprisings were later attributed by the Kerner Commission are thus detailed in the words of the people who endured or otherwise observed them daily. The insights contained in the testimony taken at the CCR hearings are a source not only of crucial information, but also of a perspective (long marginalized by scholarly methodologies that favor the sources preserved by the written tradition over those of the oral tradition) that is profoundly important for any study of black life in urban centers during the Civil Rights/Black Power era, and especially those which seek to understand that experience at the grassroots level. While the historical record makes it easier to track the thoughts, opinions, and analyses of many other organized constituencies active in black communities during the sixties, the CCR hearing testimony preserves the voices of the urban folk which have proven particularly difficult to capture elsewhere. Further, the Civil Rights Commission happened to hold its hearing in Cleveland at the Liberty Hill Baptist Church in the center of Hough during the

first week of April, 1966, just three months before the neighborhood exploded, making the Cleveland hearing testimony especially valuable for establishing the conditions of life experienced by the residents of Hough, for gleaning their thoughts and feelings about those conditions, and for understanding the efforts they made to alleviate or ameliorate them immediately prior to the uprising. These findings can be compared with the testimony offered by Hough residents at a subsequent hearing led by a group called the Cleveland's Citizens Committee that was held shortly after the 1966 uprising to record the events from the perspective of the black community following the release of a one-sided report issued by a special grand jury led by members of Cleveland's white power structure. In addition to these two collections of black community testimony, there are abundant archival materials and primary sources that give shape and dimension to Cleveland's black community during the 1960s, and their engagement with Civil Rights and Black Power initiatives throughout the decade.

As the foregoing makes clear, the major intervention advanced by the development of Black Studies as an academic field—shifting the black experience and the perspectives that accrue to that experience from the margin of scholarly inquiry to the center—informs the methodological approach that will guide this dissertation. The history related in the following pages (with the partial exception of the first chapter) is presented according to a humanist framework that assumes the agency of individual actors as the driving force of historical progression. Consequently, the focus concerns events on the ground, especially the actions, interactions, thoughts, words, insights, and motivations of black Clevelanders engaged in political struggle at the grassroots level. A

humanist framework is particularly appropriate for a Black Studies dissertation, rising organically from the mission and purpose of the field. The dehumanization of people of African descent is the foundation upon which the edifice of racial oppression in the United States was built and maintained for centuries, a project to which the American academy contributed its share by lending a veneer of intellectual gravitas used to justify pervasive subjugation and enduring inequality. The interventions that Black Studies has made and continues to make in the academy have, by contrast, been based fundamentally on an assertion of black humanity and a detailed consideration of its many expressions throughout time. It is quite natural and appropriate, therefore, that a humanist framework which foregrounds the deeds and ideas of black people be used to structure the scholarly analysis of the history of the black experience in the United States.

This work is, of course, not the first to study the black community in Cleveland. The most comprehensive early effort to survey the black presence in Cleveland was made by Russell H. Davis, whose *Black Americans in Cleveland* spans the time between Cleveland's founding in 1796 to the end of Carl Stokes's first term in 1969. Building on that work is Kenneth Kusmer's groundbreaking study of ghetto formation which analyzes the dynamics that led to the establishment of a rigidly segregated black community in Cleveland for the first time in the city's history between 1880 and 1930. Following somewhat on Kusmer's heels is Kimberly Phillips, whose work chronicles the migration of black people to Cleveland primarily from Alabama and Georgia during the period between the world wars, and the development of political and community activism

among Cleveland's black working-class.¹⁰ In a sense, this work will update the chronology of those earlier studies of the black community in Cleveland to include the post-World War II era, and particularly the Civil Rights/Black Power era of the 1960s.¹¹ Specifically, this study will center on the uprising that exploded in Hough, a poverty-stricken neighborhood located at the geographic heart of the black ghetto, in mid-July, 1966, and the impact of that event on the subsequent approaches to power that black Clevelanders pursued in the aftermath, in order to expand the conceptual categories that

¹⁰ Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland: From George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1967* (Washington, D.C.: The Associate Publishers, 1972); Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Kimberly L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996). There have likewise been a number of dissertations focusing on the black experience in Cleveland prior to the 1960s. See, Christopher G. Wye, "Midwest Ghetto: Patterns of Negro Life and Thought in Cleveland, Ohio, 1929-1945" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1973); Carolyn Jefferson, "An Historical Analysis of the Relationship between the Great Migration and the Administrative Policies and Practices of Racial Isolation in the Cleveland Public Schools: 1920-1940" (Ph.D. diss., Cleveland State University, 1991); Glenn Looman, "Karamu House: The Establishment and Evolution of a Settlement House for Cleveland's African-American Community, 1914-1923" (Ph.D. diss., Cleveland State University, 1997); Regennia Nanette Williams, "Equity and Efficiency: African American Leadership and Education Reform in Cleveland, Ohio: 1915-1940" (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2001).

¹¹ There are a handful of books dealing with the black experience in Cleveland during the 1960s, almost all of which focus on the election of Carl Stokes and/or his tenure as mayor. These include: Kenneth G. Weinberg, *Black Victory: Carl Stokes and the Winning of Cleveland* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968); Estelle Zanes with Mary Jean Thomas, *Checkmate in Cleveland: The Rhetoric of Confrontation During the Stokes Years* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1972); Carl B. Stokes, *Promises of Power: A Political Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); and Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002). See also, Louis H. Masotti and Jerome R. Corsi, *Shootout in Cleveland: Black Militants and the Police: July 23, 1968* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969). There are also a number of pertinent scholarly articles, including Leonard N. Moore, "The School Desegregation Crisis of Cleveland, Ohio, 1963-1964," *Journal of Urban History* 28: 2 (January 2002): 135-157, and Todd M. Michney, "Race, Violence, and Urban Territoriality: Cleveland's Little Italy and the 1966 Hough Uprising," *Journal of Urban History* 32:3 (March 2006) 404-425; as well as several dissertations, including: Raymond J. Jirran, "Cleveland and the Negro following World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1972); Kenneth Wayne Rose, "The Politics of Social Reform in Cleveland, 1945-1967: Civil Rights, Welfare Rights, and the Response of Civic Leaders" (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1988); Leonard Nathaniel Moore, "The Limits of Black Power: Carl B. Stokes and Cleveland's African-American Community, 1945-1971" (Ph.D. diss., Cleveland State University, 1999); Todd Michael Michney, "Changing Neighborhoods: Race and Upward Mobility in Southeast Cleveland: 1930-1980" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2004); Donna McIntyre Whyte, "African-American Community Politics and Racial Equality in Cleveland Public Schools: 1933-1973" (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2007); and Nishani Frazier, "Harambee Nation: Cleveland CORE, Community Organization, and the Rise of Black Power" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2008).

have so far shaped scholarly understanding of the relationship between the uprisings in urban black communities and the Black Power movement.

This study will move beyond the dichotomy that presents the uprisings as either the result of agitation by militant black nationalists and communists, or the result of frustration over economic marginalization and political powerlessness during a time of increasing expectations among black people generally brought about by the legislative victories of the Civil Rights movement. In the first case, several militant black organizations active in Cleveland that argued the necessity of revolution through armed struggle in order to achieve true liberation for black people in the United States were indeed organizing among the black youth of Hough and Glenville in the hopes of building the ranks of a guerrilla force that could actively engage the state through an ongoing insurgency. Despite the political perspective and long-range goals of these nationalist formations, however, the evidence demonstrates that the young people who engaged in the uprising acted without guidance or leadership from any such organization. The assertion of a link between militant black nationalists and the uprisings in Cleveland was advanced most vociferously by white conservatives, locally and nationally, who were motivated by a desire to pass legislation strengthening the Internal Security Act which would make it easier for local and federal authorities to surveil, infiltrate, discredit, and destroy groups advocating black liberation—a cause deemed threatening to the internal security of the United States—by harassing, discrediting, imprisoning, or otherwise neutralizing the leadership. A more objective assessment of the influence of groups like the Afro-American Institute, the Medgar Evers Rifle Club, and the JFK House that

recognizes the contribution of the political analysis they presented to the development of the militant atmosphere prevalent in Hough by 1966, without overstating the involvement of their membership or leadership in the uprising, is certainly necessary.

On the other hand, while the claim that the economic, social, and political marginalization of Cleveland's black poor as the paramount cause of the uprising in Hough carries considerable weight, the lack of a repeat of the unrest of the 1960s in more recent times, despite the persistence and worsening of the conditions cited as causal, must be further interrogated. If the frustration of Hough residents generated by their economic and political marginalization was enough to cause an uprising in 1966, the fact that no such event has occurred in Cleveland since then, even as that marginalization has remained largely unchanged, is curious indeed. Moreover, the lack of unrest in the post-Civil Rights/ Black Power era suggests the importance of the political context of resistance to oppression and injustice established by the ongoing black freedom struggle during the 1960s in creating a climate conducive to the eruption of urban uprisings. Engaging this question also invites an assessment of the effect of the repressive tactics waged by the state against Black Power organizations and their leaders in order to secure

“law and order” and prevent subsequent rebellions.¹²

By drawing its analysis from the experiences and perceptions of the black community in Hough during and after the uprising, this study gives rise to an alternate interpretation of urban uprisings. While considering the economic and political marginalization of Hough residents and acknowledging the expanding influence of black nationalist groups, particularly among young men and teenagers in the neighborhood, the detailed examination of the Hough uprising presented here ultimately emphasizes the twin brutalities of police violence and official neglect, not simply as provocations, but as central components of the unrest, thereby exposing the fundamental role of power—expressed as both naked force and control over the political system—in maintaining

¹² Michael B. Katz, “Why Don’t American Cities Burn Very Often?,” *Journal of Urban History* 34:2 (January 2008) 185-208, grapples with this question and arrives at a multifaceted explanation for the lack of renewed civil violence—the term Katz prefers to categorize the uprisings—despite the persistence of the assumed causes in the post-Civil Rights/Black Power era. Among the reasons Katz cites are: “ebbing border conflicts as whites, fleeing central cities, ceded control of urban space to African Americans,” as well as several “techniques for managing marginalization,” which include the “selective incorporation” of African Americans into middle class life in greater numbers in the decades following the 1960s; “mimetic reform,” which Katz defines as “measures that respond to insurgent demands without devolving real power or redistributing significant resources”; and the enhancement of law enforcement capabilities to quash dissent more forcefully through the acquisition of robust hardware and training in military practices. Katz also cites scholarship that suggests a connection between increasingly repressive methods of police engagement with urban black communities and the “de-politicization” of the young men who, in the previous era, would have been the most likely candidates to join militant political organizations. Instead, Katz argues, these young men directed that violence inward at their peers in an escalation of gang violence.

Katz essentially gives equal weight to all of these factors by failing to distinguish between the relative influence each had on suppressing a recurrence of civil violence—an admittedly difficult task, particularly since Katz bases his argument on sociological theories and aggregated data sets that purport to explain the conditions in which civil violence erupts rather than evidence derived from historical examples. As such, certain aspects of Katz’s argument prove more convincing than others. His notion that white flight from cities, which he says helped prevent the recurrence of black uprisings by reducing the potential for violence over “border conflicts” between white and black neighborhoods, is the most misguided. In the first place, while his preferred term, civil violence, is broad enough to include the localized skirmishes that did sometimes flare up along the boundaries between black and white neighborhoods, these are not the events Katz is actually talking about in his article. Instead, his analysis focuses on the uprisings in black ghettos during the second half of the 1960s which were not a product of “boundary challenge.” As the example of Cleveland makes clear, white flight peaked during the 1950s, years before the uprisings occurred. Of the 330,657 whites who left Cleveland between 1940 and 1970, fully 78 percent had decamped by 1964, with 141,800 whites leaving during the 1950s alone, a larger out-migration than any other decade. Katz is on firmer ground when he moves his discussion to the management of marginalization. The most convincing is the effect of enhanced law enforcement and the repressive practices of the agents of control which worked determinedly in the later 1960s and 1970s to eliminate organizations and leaders that might unite the disaffected ghetto youth and channel their grievances into an effective political movement.

racial oppression in Cleveland. Indeed, the dual methods through which Black Clevelanders pursued power after the Hough uprising, including the election of Carl Stokes as the first black mayor of a major American city, and the organization of armed cadres to defend the community against police violence, suggest the immediate application of the lessons learned from the uprising.

In taking this approach, this study helps to root the demand for power as a means to black liberation during the latter half of the 1960s not just in the political ideology espoused by militant organizations, but in the lived experiences of ordinary people as well. By August of 1966, with a rigid pattern of residential segregation marking clear boundaries between white space and black space, with a recalcitrant city government unwilling to address the myriad problems in black neighborhoods for which they had lawful responsibility (housing inspection, garbage collection, and inadequate educational facilities, to name but a few), with systematic exclusion from trade unions helping to keep black workers concentrated in menial positions at the bottom of the labor market if not unemployed altogether, with routine exploitation by unscrupulous local merchants who charged inflated prices for inferior goods, and, especially, with city police officers having stormed the neighborhood *en masse* in response to a rebellious outburst, besieging Hough residents in their homes, destroying their property, brutalizing women and children, murdering two people and shooting nearly a dozen others who were lucky to survive their injuries, few Hough residents, no matter what their political orientation, were likely to find much fault with the characterization of their neighborhood as an occupied territory within (if not an internal colony of) the United States.

While a detailed analysis of the 1966 uprising in Hough and its effect on subsequent black political struggle in Cleveland forms the core of the study, those events are considered in the context of two major postwar developments—the Second Great Migration, and the expansion of the black ghetto—that reshaped cities across the country and prepared the ground in which the political struggle of the 1960s would take root. As such, this project consists of two parts, opening with two chapters that provide an overview of Cleveland from the end of World War II to the mid-1960s. Chapter One, “Seeds: Black Migration and Ghetto Formation in Postwar Cleveland,” considers the influx of hundreds of thousands of African Americans during the second Great Migration and the effects of that population shift on the expansion and transformation of the black ghetto.¹³ Also important here is the storied incompetence with which Cleveland officials conducted local urban renewal programs during the postwar years (ultimately leading the federal government to cut off all urban renewal funding to Cleveland), and the effects those policy decisions had on concentrating the poverty and intensifying the blight in Hough and other black neighborhoods, especially as the gradual deindustrialization of Cleveland’s economy continually reduced the demand for unskilled or low-skilled workers—a group to which a considerable percentage of the southern migrants to Cleveland, black and white, belonged.

¹³ The Stokes election in 1967 has been seen as one result of these demographic changes as African Americans by then comprised upwards of 35% of the electorate in a city where the white voters were quite staunchly divided along ethnic lines. The possible links between the Black population surge after the second great migration and the Hough uprising in ’66 have received less attention, though some scholars—who understand that event to be mainly the result of concentrated frustration among the expanding ranks of Cleveland’s Black poor as the numerical size of Hough grew much larger and faster than its physical parameters, and as the American “dream” of suburban home ownership was deferred for Cleveland’s Black working and middle class by FHA lending guidelines and other forms of institutional racism—have at least opened the door.

The second chapter, “Roots: Civil Rights Protest and the Rise of Revolutionary Nationalism in AlabamaNorth,” examines the rise of early civil rights efforts in Cleveland in response to those conditions, focusing on the grassroots political action of black Clevelanders who formed new organizations during the early 1960s to challenge residential segregation and substandard housing conditions, confront *de facto* segregation and overcrowding in public schools, reform welfare policies that were inadequate in meeting the needs of Black families, and expand access to the ranks of organized labor and improve job training initiatives for Black workers. This chapter is also concerned with the revival of black nationalism and the formation of organizations prior to the 1966 uprising whose advocacy of armed self defense in response to violent white resistance to civil rights initiatives, most notably school integration, foreshadowed the rise of a militant political sensibility later associated with Black Power. In addition, the rise of Malcolm X as the prophet of the North, the presence of Mae Mallory following her escape from Monroe, North Carolina after a standoff between the authorities and Robert F. Williams and his supporters (including Mallory), and the close affiliation with black militants, including Richard and Milton Henry, James and Grace Lee Boggs, General Baker and others in nearby Detroit all added to the developing project of black liberation in Cleveland by 1964.

The second part of the study consists of two additional chapters. Chapters three and four, “Bricks: Rebellion, Community Control, and Black Power,” parts one and two, provide a richly detailed, day-by-day examination of the Hough uprising in 1966 (bricks as weapons of the oppressed), including an analysis of the relationship between Hough

residents and the white power structure of Cleveland—especially the Cleveland Police Department. The discussion also focuses on the role of the JFK House (bricks as the building blocks of community-controlled institutions), a black nationalist oriented community center that was actively engaged in organizing the youth of Hough, and was subsequently accused by the white leadership of Cleveland and members of the U.S. Senate of instead conducting a “fire bomb training school” and planning and directing the Hough uprising.

CHAPTER 1

SEEDS: BLACK MIGRATION AND GHETTO FORMATION IN POSTWAR CLEVELAND

Late on the night of October 31, 1966, a homemade firebomb crashed through a window of the Franklin Roosevelt Junior High School, landing on the floor of the wood shop where it caused only minor damage. Earlier that evening a similar attempt directed at the nearby Spry's Grocery Store failed when the bottle containing accelerant shattered against an exterior door of the building, leaving behind only broken glass and a rag. In the early morning hours of November 1, a third attempt would prove more destructive. The last target was the Pentecostal Church of Christ a few blocks down and across the street from Franklin Roosevelt Junior High. The estimated damage to the church exceeded \$10,000. On the night of November 1, officers from the Cleveland Police Department (CPD) who were investigating the incidents raided an apartment in the Glenville neighborhood on Cleveland's East side where they reported discovering a "cache of fire bombs and racist literature," as well as several signs they described as "hate banners." The apartment was rented by Harold Mitchell, a twenty-two year old man who had involved himself in several black nationalist organizations in Cleveland. According to the police, the apartment also served as the headquarters of the United Black Brotherhood (UBB), a coalition formed by an alliance of members from three pre-existing black nationalist groups at a midnight meeting in an apartment above the Liberty Theater in August, 1966.¹ Among the "racist literature" found in the apartment were

¹ Cleveland Plain Dealer, September 14, November 2, 1966. See also, *Gaps in Internal Security Laws: Hearings Before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws*, part 5, 177-214.

documents revealing the group’s intention to fight for the destruction of western capitalism and the racial oppression it spawned in the United States.

What the police described as hate banners were in fact picket signs used by members of the JFK House, a self-described black nationalist community-based recreation center for local youth named in honor Jomo “Freedom” Kenyatta, to protest the regular harassment they received from city police and other elements of the white power structure in Cleveland. One of the signs inquired directly: “WHY DO POLICE HARRASS [*sic*] J.F.K. YOUTH[?]” When the center was opened by a small group of volunteers led by Lewis G. Robinson, Harllel Jones, and Albert Ware-Bey in the fall of 1964, it initially won the support of the CPD who “checked out the place,” and found that “the intent and purpose of the center were good.” Acknowledging that “kids need a place to congregate,” Sixth District Police Captain Norman Raymond initially thought the JFK House “seem[ed] like the right kind of place.” However, Robinson’s role in organizing the Medgar Evers Rifle Club 1964 to protect civil rights protesters in Cleveland from violent white mobs earlier that year had attracted the attention of the FBI and increased the surveillance from the subversive squad of the Cleveland Police Department. Encounters between police and the leadership of JFK House or the local youth who used the center grew more frequent throughout 1965, but the crescendo did not arrive until the summer of 1966.²

² Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, November 2, 1966; Cleveland *Call and Post*, December 12, 1964. A detailed account of the founding of JFK House, and the relationship between the organization and the police can be found in Lewis G. Robinson, *The Making of a Man* (Green and Sons: Cleveland) 1970, especially chapter 9.

For five days during July of 1966, the nearly all-black neighborhood of Hough exploded in a conflagration marked by widespread arson and looting committed by some of the area's residents, as well as home invasion, personal violence, and property destruction committed by the city's overwhelmingly white police force against the people of Hough. While smaller in comparison to the uprising in Watts that preceded it by a year, as well as those that would flare up in Newark and Detroit the following year, the unrest in Hough, if measured by the number of casualties and the value of property destroyed, was the worst of the black "ghetto riots" of 1966.³ The restoration of order by the National Guard several days after the trouble began was quickly followed by the impulse among city officials to reassert the rule of law, and the Cuyahoga County Grand Jury was convened for the primary purpose of establishing "the immediate cause of the fire bombing, shooting, pillaging, general lawlessness and disorder" that had occurred. The jury's conclusion that "a relatively small group of trained and disciplined professionals" were responsible for organizing and instigating the events of the Hough uprising was met with scorn by black Clevelanders, who insisted that the nearly 60,000 people—88 percent of whom were black—crammed into a two-square-mile ghetto characterized by old and dilapidated housing, vacant lots and alleys piled with uncollected garbage that invited infestations of rats and other disease-spreading vermin, overcrowded schools and severely limited recreational facilities for children, a lack of jobs even for workers with education and experience, and limited availability of food and other necessities which

³ The casualties included four dead, all black people, and sixty-nine injured. Property damage ran into the millions spurred by over 500 fires. More than 300 arrests were made. A detailed analysis of the Hough rebellion is made in chapters 3 and 4. See, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders: Hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Government Operations, part 13*. U.S. Senate, 1967-1970, 2762-3.

even then only came at a higher cost than elsewhere in the city, people whose primary point of contact with the power structure that helped sustain such conditions was a hostile and aggressive police force, needed no one to provoke them to rebellion. Nevertheless, the grand jury report labeled the JFK House a “fire bomb training school” and fingered Lewis G. Robinson and Harllel Jones as the primary architects of the mayhem.⁴

The political activities of Lewis G. Robinson, Harllel Jones, and many others operating at the grassroots of the black community in Cleveland, the organizations they formed and joined to combat the prevailing conditions of life in the city’s sprawling East-side ghetto in which the vast majority of black people were trapped in the 1960s, in short, the assortment of approaches taken by black people in Cleveland to empower themselves and their community during that decade, form the basis of discussion for much of this study, and will be fully explored in subsequent chapters. In order to understand the grassroots political initiatives that were waged not only in Cleveland but in cities throughout the country during the 1960s, and which collectively formed a movement for black liberation, it is necessary to understand more about the conditions people were fighting to change and the historical processes by which those conditions were established. This chapter, then, explores two large-scale historical developments of the mid-twentieth century that were critical precursors to the political developments of the Civil Rights and Black Power era of the 1960s in urban areas in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, Great Lakes and West coast regions: the relocation of hundreds of thousands of black southerners from the region of their birth to cities elsewhere, and the formation of

⁴ Cuyahoga County Grand Jury, “Special Grand Jury Report Relating to the Hough Riots,” August, 1966, 1. This report is available in the Cleveland Public Library.

postwar ghettos in those cities in which the migrants and already established black residents were compelled to live.

MIGRATION SCHOLARSHIP OLD AND NEW

Historians and scholars from several social science disciplines have produced a sizable body of work considering the large-scale movement of African Americans from the southern United States to the cities of the North and other regions of the United States during the twentieth century.⁵ The majority of the scholarship details the relocation of hundreds of thousands of black people during the Great Migration of the World War I era and the 1920s, after which the volume of migrants appeared to recede from the pinnacle of the wartime years even though black folk continued to leave the South. Early studies considered the migration a rural to urban phenomenon, and focused primarily on the economic motivations, especially job opportunities in the war industries, that pulled migrants out of the southern countryside and brought them to the centers of industrial production concentrated in the cities of the northeast and midwest.⁶ Subsequent scholarship teased out the nuances inherent in the mass migration, revealing that most migrants relocated several times before settling in the North, gaining experience with different kinds of wage labor including industrial work during their travels, and

⁵ An excellent survey and analysis of historical scholarship on the migration of black southerners to northern cities between the World Wars can be found in the Introduction to Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions in Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991). See Stewart E. Tolnay “The African American ‘Great Migration’ and Beyond,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 209-33 for a survey of the sociological literature on the migration.

⁶ Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920); Louise V. Kennedy, *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward: Effects of Recent Migrations to Northern Cities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930); Edward E. Lewis, *The Mobility of the Negro: A Study in the American Labor Supply* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931).

frequently departing from southern cities as well as the region's rural areas. This expanded view of the Great Migration also considered the range of factors, including segregation, disfranchisement, racial violence, the boll weevil infestation and other environmental challenges to agricultural production that helped push black migrants out of the South, and noted aspects of life in the North beyond access to higher wages that migrants perceived as appealing, yielding a more sophisticated push/pull analysis of the migration. Over time, the original picture of the "typical" migrant as a destitute, illiterate, black sharecropper who would struggle to adapt to life in an urban setting was replaced as scholars revealed the higher-than-average level of education, the experience living in and adapting to southern cities, and the sustaining network of family connections common to many migrants. Historians also considered the gender dynamics of migration, and noted evidence of a generational shift among black southerners by the beginning of the twentieth century as black people in their late teens and early twenties left farms to seek wage work in southern towns and cities or else in the extractive industries in the region's forests, a trend that intensified during periods of distress for the agricultural economy of the South. It was this younger generation of black men and women, historians have argued, that was best prepared to make the move North, and that ultimately did so in greater numbers.⁷

A portion of this more recent work on the Great Migration also broadened the timeframe under analysis. As some scholars extended the period of migration further into

⁷ See Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989; and, on the migrants who settled in Cleveland, Kimberly L. Phillips *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

the twentieth century, stretching it through the end of World War II in 1945, others looked back into the nineteenth century, linking the relocation between the world wars to the post-emancipation process of African American migration during Reconstruction when former slaves, looking to realize their own visions of freedom, went in search of land, more favorable working conditions, and/or family members dispersed throughout the South by the domestic slave trade. This look backward at the roots of African American migration in the nineteenth century is largely responsible for the emergence of the more detailed and nuanced analysis of the dynamics underpinning the World War I-era migration described above.⁸ On the other hand, the focus on the World War II era revealed a large volume of black southern migration during the 1940s and 1950s, an apparent second Great Migration, sparking debate about how to best periodize, label, and conceptualize the movement of African Americans from the South to other regions of the country during the twentieth century.⁹

Quite recently, James, N. Gregory has advanced a new interpretive lens, drawing on new data to quantify the volume of black southern migration from 1940 to 1970, revealing the extent to which it dwarfs the migration from 1900 to 1930, and giving credence to the view that the first five decades of the twentieth century contained two migrations of black southerners large enough and influential enough to merit the label “Great.” In addition, the data show a corresponding migration of white people out of the South during the latter period. Thus, Gregory advocates viewing the movement of black

⁸ Though it has roots in much older scholarship, such as Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1918).

⁹ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1991); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010) takes the long view, surveying the period from 1915-1970.

southerners during the twentieth century not simply as a two great waves of migration, but as part of a general “southern diaspora” that dramatically reshaped the demography of the South and the cities of the North and West that received the migrants.¹⁰ Gregory’s analysis of the southern diaspora sheds much light on the relatively understudied post-World War II migration of African Americans and its relationship to the World War I-era migration. It also allows comparisons between the experiences of black and white southern migrants in ways that illuminate the impact of race in the urban North and West during the decades (1950s and 1960s) when the nation’s attention was more often riveted on the “race problem” of the American South.

In fact, not until the black communities in northern and western cities exploded in a series of uprisings (the so-called black ghetto riots) during the mid-1960s did attention shift to the “race problem” present in these areas. As federal government agencies and the social scientists they employed began their investigations, they discovered not only a race problem but a poverty problem as well. Study after study, each hoping to discern the causes of the events they categorized either as civil disorders or riots, reported on the prevailing conditions of life for black people in urban ghettos. They described rigid patterns of residential segregation by race that resulted in nearly or entirely all-black neighborhoods that were marked by deteriorating and overcrowded housing stocks, high rates of unemployment, high concentrations of poverty, high levels of crime, hostile

¹⁰ James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Gregory acknowledges his debt to earlier studies comparing black and white migrations from the South, including Jack Temple Kirby, “The Southern Exodus, 1910-1960: A Primer for Historians,” *Journal of Southern History* 49 (November 1983): 585-600; Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed: America’s Underclass from the Civil War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), especially 205-68; and Neil Fligstein, *Going North: Migration of Blacks and Whites from the South, 1900-1950* (New York, Academic Press, 1981), among others.

relationships with local police, and high incidences of what one observer interpreted as the “pathological” family structure of female-headed households.

For the most part, neither the social scientists nor the government officials understood these phenomena as consequences of racism, capitalism, or other structural elements of American society, initially preferring to instead locate the causes of these social problems within African American culture and the historical experience of slavery by which they assumed that culture was formed.¹¹ The continuation of the “urban crisis” into the 1970s led to the propagation of sociological studies of the urban (quickly becoming synonymous with “black”) “underclass,” the first of which were guided by an understanding of urban poverty, unemployment, crime rates, family structure, and so forth as the result of the values and behavior of individuals.¹² This essentially conservative emphasis on individual responsibility and choice was bolstered by overlapping analyses of the federal programs implemented as a part of Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty and their supposed failure. Rather than eliminating poverty, these scholars argued, the War on Poverty had instead nurtured a “culture of poverty” that pervaded the ranks of the urban (black) poor whose dependence on the state perpetuated their continued unemployment. In this view, the urban poor became the “undeserving poor,” and the proposed solution was the reform or elimination of federal and state welfare programs. Aid to Dependent Children (ADC, later Aid to Families with

¹¹ Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1965). See also, E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

¹² Edward C. Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968) set the trend, though he referred to the urban poor as “lower class” people rather than the underclass.

Dependent Children or AFDC), the largest social welfare program, was also viewed as promoting the destruction of the “traditional” two-parent family structure by incentivizing young (black) women to have children out of wedlock, feeding the cycle of “broken” homes, and reinforcing the “culture of poverty” in future generations.

Of course, the scholarly view was not monolithic, and another body of literature developed, pushing back against the “culture of poverty” thesis and the characterization of the urban poor as “undeserving,” and stressing structural explanations for the development of the underclass.¹³ Tomas J. Sugrue, surveying all of this work, noted a divide among scholars who argued for structural explanations between those emphasizing economic factors, primarily the deindustrialization of the American economy, those foregrounding the continued impact of racial discrimination in maintaining the inequality of opportunity between white and black people in the United States, and those highlighting the declining political power of cities generally after the 1960s. Sugrue further argued that the perspective of history was largely absent from the underclass scholarship in general, leading social scientists to miss the forest for the trees, as it were. By focusing almost exclusively on the symptoms, these scholars failed to consider the origins of the urban crisis, which Sugrue located in the “mutual reinforcement of race, economics, and politics in a particular historical moment, the period from the 1940s to the 1960s.”¹⁴

¹³ See Herbert J. Gans, *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995) for an overview of the way in which the poor have been labeled by scholars and the press since the 1960s. Gans’s work is also an example of the push back against the behavioral explanations of persistent poverty, especially among black city dwellers.

¹⁴ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3-5.

New tools allow us to compare the experiences of postwar black and white southern-born migrants, and to gauge the impact of race and economics in creating the postwar black ghettos in cities throughout the northeast, midwest, mid-Atlantic, and West coast that by the 1960s became sites of concentrated poverty and the attendant social problems insinuated by the term urban crisis. At the same time, of course, such areas also became sites of rebellion (and other political action) in city after city throughout the country. In the remainder of this chapter, I will use some of Gregory's methodology to analyze the migration of black southerners to Cleveland from 1940 to 1970 in order to reveal the setting of the stage, as it were, for the grassroots political developments of the 1960s that are the focus of this study. Guided in part by Sugrue's analysis, I will show how the Second Great Migration was linked by the racial and economic dynamics, as well as the public policy decisions, of the postwar urban North to the formation of the second ghetto in Cleveland in an area spanning the conjoined neighborhoods of Hough and Glenville, the space in which the fiercest resistance to racial inequality and the most assertive attempt to establish black power in Cleveland took root.

THE SECOND GREAT MIGRATION, NATIONAL OVERVIEW

In order to understand the postwar migration of black southerners to Cleveland in context, an overview of the Second Great Migration (SGM) at the national level is in order. The most notable aspect of the second migration is, of course, its size. More than three million black people left the South from 1940 to 1970 at an average rate of just over one million per decade, making the Second Great Migration roughly double the size of

the first, even if we stretch the conventional periodization of the earlier migration by a decade to include black southerners who relocated between the years of 1910 and 1940.

The impact of the second migration on the nation at large was also enormous, as the population shift radically altered the demography of the United States. Indeed:

within one generation, a people who had been mostly rural became mostly urban. A people mostly southern spread to all regions of the United States. A people mostly accustomed to poverty and equipped with farm skills now pushed their way into the core of the American economy.¹⁵

This impact was aided, in part, by the fact that many black southerners who relocated after 1940 followed the trails blazed by migrants of the first World War-era to a selection of cities in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes regions. As we will see, the large concentration of black migrants in these areas had profound implications for the transformation of the political structures within these cities, a fact certainly true of Cleveland, where the greatly expanded black population, combined with the decrease in the city's rapidly-suburbanizing white population helped make the 1967 election of Carl Stokes as the first black Mayor of a major American city possible. The political significance of this demographic shift also impacted those engaged in radical politics during the 1960s, including those associated with Black Power politics. James Boggs, the autoworker and revolutionary activist from Detroit, was, along with his wife, Grace Lee Boggs, led by the large-scale shift of the black population from the rural south to the urban North and West to theorize the territory of the black nation in altogether new terms. Noting the movement of black people out of the “black belt” of the southern cotton lands, the Boggses proclaimed the city as “the Black man's land,” articulating the black nation

¹⁵ James N. Gregory, “The Second Great Migration: A Historical Perspective,” in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, ed. Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 20.

as an archipelago concentrated in urban cores across the United States, the affairs of which would be directed by black revolutionary governments established through the application of Black Power politics in cities with large black populations.¹⁶

The second migration was not, however, a simple magnification of the first. Another of the notable characteristics of the SGM was the additional spread of black migrants into areas that received few if any newcomers during the first Great Migration, especially cities in the West Coast states. Thus, while New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Cleveland remained important destinations for those who moved during the SGM, with New York continuing to draw more migrants than any other city, they were joined by Los Angeles, which became the third most popular destination, ranking between Chicago (second) and Detroit (fourth), and the San Francisco Bay area, which sat between Philadelphia (fifth) and Cleveland (seventh) as the sixth most popular destination for migrants.¹⁷

The networks that connected black folks living in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes cities with family and friends still in the South were well developed by 1940, and they certainly helped to draw black southerners to these areas during the second migration. However, it was World War II and the massive build up of industrial production geared to serve the war effort that not only pulled the nation out of the Great Depression, and, consequently, set people in motion once again, but also drew black southerners to the West Coast in large numbers for the first time. Beyond the lure of well-

¹⁶ Grace and James Boggs, "The City is the Black Man's Land," *Monthly Review* 17 no. 11 (April 1966): 35-46.

¹⁷ Gregory, "The Second Great Migration: A Historical Perspective," 22.

paying jobs in factories producing the tanks, guns, airplanes, munitions, ships, and other materiel needed for the war, military service itself was a conduit out of the South for many black people, as a large portion of the roughly one million African American service members during World War II were southerners. According to one calculation, some 41 percent of southern-born black veterans were living in some other region of the country in 1970.¹⁸

While the mobilization for World War II contributed the greatest amount of force pulling black people (and white people) out of the South, there were, as there had been during the first migration, other factors helping to push black folks to leave the region. Arguably the most influential of these was the reorganization of southern agriculture via the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) and other New Deal programs initiated after the sector collapsed during the Great Depression. The “traditional” system of southern agricultural production organized around black slavery gave way in the aftermath of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery to a system of sharecropping by tenant farmers. Dissatisfaction with the exploitative regime and the increased burden black farmers endured during periods of economic distress and decline—conditions which prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century—contributed to the movement particularly of younger black men and women off the land and into the towns and cities of the South where they went in search of wage work.¹⁹ However, restraints on black mobility imposed by laws regulating debtors and limited opportunities for employment in other occupations are reflected in the fact that the majority of black southerns remained tenant farmers into the

¹⁸ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁹ Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, Chapter 1, especially 26-39.

1930s despite the repeated devastation of cotton crops throughout the south during the 1920s as a consequence of natural disasters and the primitive production methods prevalent in southern agriculture.²⁰ Increased competition from cotton production in other countries diminished the United States's share of the global cotton market and kept cotton prices low during the 1920s. Years of poor yields and low prices drove tenants into greater debt with landlords, and landowners into greater debt with banks and their other creditors. As plantation owners defaulted on their debt obligations, southern cotton lands were held by financial institutions with little interest in the sharecropping system, preferring instead tenants who could pay cash rent. Because many black sharecroppers were deeply indebted (as much a product of fraud and coercion by white landowners as it was a result of market forces) and unable to pay cash rent, they had little choice but to move on in search of work.²¹

The situation only worsened as the depression deepened, diminishing demand for southern cotton and other crops, and lowering prices even further. The intervention of the AAA, which subsidized farmers for reducing their crop production in a bid to raise prices by stimulating demand through the decline in supply, provided considerable relief to southern landowners, the vast majority of whom were white. Distribution of the subsidy was overseen through county-level committees and controlled by landowners who were supposed to share it with their tenants. However, the political disempowerment of southern blacks during the preceding decades left black farmers with severely limited

²⁰ Ibid., 39; Daniel R. Fusfeld and Timothy Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 52-58.

²¹ Fusfeld and Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, 58-60.

means to challenge the discriminatory manner in which the program was administered. Rather than disperse the federal payment equitably, white landowners pulled the land farmed by their tenants out of production, kept the subsidy, invested in mechanical farm equipment, and hired back their former tenants as wage laborers who earned an average net income of \$175 per year. Black farmers who avoided this fate remained as sharecroppers, earning a net income of \$295 per year, on average. A comparison of these figures with those for white sharecroppers (\$417) and wage hands (\$232) reveals the explicitly racial bias embedded in the southern labor market.²² The mechanization of southern agriculture initially made possible for white landowners through the largess of the AAA continued during the 1940s and 1950s as technological improvements increased the amount of labor performed by machines. The demand for large numbers of black agricultural workers had diminished tremendously by the mid-1950s, pushing many black southerners off the land and swelling the ranks of those who migrated in search of wage work.

The racialized economic factors that drove the transformation of southern agriculture were not the only force pushing of black people out of the South. As was true during the first migration, the climate of racial injustice, discrimination, and violence that pervaded the Jim Crow-era South was undoubtedly a consideration for black southerners who left during the Second Great Migration.²³ The massive resistance waged by white southerners against early civil rights initiatives for integration following the *Brown*

²² Figures from Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 41.

²³ The single best work on the violence and terror of the Jim Crow-era South is Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

decision in 1954, which included the reinvigoration of the Ku Klux Klan and the blossoming of white Citizens' Councils, revealed the ever-present possibility of violence directed against anyone willing to challenge white supremacy by fighting for the civil and political rights of black southerners.²⁴

The argument that the bigotry and restraints on black freedom in the South have tended to chafe at the younger generations of black people most of all can be found in studies focused on every period of African American southern history from the post-Reconstruction imposition of Jim Crow up to the civil rights era. This is true of migration scholarship, as well, which articulates a number of explanations for the preponderance of younger people among the general population of black southerners who migrated. Indeed, frustration over severely limited options for black people in the South may well have inspired young people to seek out greater opportunity elsewhere. As some historians have pointed out, however, such frustration alone was usually not enough. As the uncertainty of the southern agrarian economy grew more severe by the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the ability to find wage work, typically as domestic workers, service workers outside private homes, or laborers in the growing towns and cities, or else in the extractive industries in the forests, became increasingly important for maintaining the livelihood of many black southern families. Those families who could find the means also sent their children to school for as long as they could afford. These factors collectively account for the trend of young black men and women migrating farther from home to perform work and staying away from home for longer periods of time.

²⁴ Simply transgressing the boundaries of imposed racial hierarchy, even by children, could trigger murderous white violence, as happened in the tragic case of Emmett Till in 1955.

Initially, those who moved tended to stay within the South, though some scholars of the first Great Migration argue that these regional moves helped prepare black southerners to eventually relocate farther away, citing accounts of individuals who moved North during the World War I-era migration after first moving within the South. More than simply gaining familiarity with the process of relocating, these moves within the South often helped migrants acquire skills that would enable them to be successful in the industrial cities of the North. This pattern proved especially true for black migrants to Cleveland, a city whose industry was dominated by steel and oil, and supported by coal. Not surprisingly, the greatest number of black migrants to Cleveland, during both the first and second Great Migrations, came from Alabama where relocation from farms to the steel cities of Birmingham and Bessemer allowed young migrants to acquire experience and skills as steel workers. Similarly, migrants to Cleveland reported moving first to West Virginia where they gained experience as coal miners.²⁵

This picture of the young, ambitious migrant familiar with living in an urban area, experienced with wage work and possessed of skills specific to the industries of northern cities, as well as some education, refutes the earliest depictions of a “typical” black southern migrant as an impoverished, uneducated sharecropper who, lacking the knowledge or ability to adapt to an urban environment, lived a life marked by disorganization and dysfunction.²⁶ While this characterization is problematic in its own right, it led some contemporary observers and subsequent analysts of the World War I-era

²⁵ Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 26-50. Carole C. Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone*.

²⁶ Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora*, Chapter 2 offers an extended discussion of the role of newspaper coverage of the World War I-era migration as well as subsequent portrayals of migrants in popular culture in spreading these images of black southern migrants to northern cities.

migration to conclude that the large black ghettos that formed in the slum districts of the northern cities to which black southerners moved, and the conditions of life that prevailed there, including overcrowding, poverty, crime, and poor health, were a function of the migrants' failure to adapt to city life. This argument has been challenged by more recent scholarship highlighting the skills and experience of migrants, but these challenges have mostly been based on qualitative analyses of migrant experiences. New data on the second migration help refute the earlier claim by helping to quantify the degree to which black migrants from the South were prepared and, indeed, successful.

As with the first migration, young people were a large portion of those who relocated during the Second Great Migration. People aged 15 to 29 accounted for 45 percent of migrants between 1955 and 1960, and 54 percent of those who moved between 1965 and 1970. Not all of these young people were single. Intact young families were common, and many migrants were married and lived with a spouse, especially during the war and the immediate postwar period—a circumstance sharply at odds with the image of single-parent, female-headed households that would in the 1960s become another symbol of the supposed failures of African Americans to adapt to city life. And these conditions occurred at a time when women outnumbered men as migrants, especially during the postwar period. From 1955 to 1960, only 88 men migrated for every 100 women. The years from 1965 to 1970 saw a partial restoration of gender balance among migrants with 91 men moving for every 100 women. It is likely that the mechanization of southern agriculture and the transition from sharecropping based on the labor of entire families to individual farm hands working for wages pushed black women out of agricultural work at

a higher rate than black men and contributed to the predominance of women among migrants during the 1950s.²⁷

In addition to maintaining stable households, migrants were, on average, better educated than those who remained in the South, leading some historians to label the second migration a “brain drain from the black South.”²⁸ Given the present-day tendency to link greater educational attainment with higher incomes, it is tempting to assume that the higher level of education for migrants yielded higher incomes, and a cursory glance at the data would seem to support that view. In 1950, black men in their prime earning years (35-49) who had left the South reported earning incomes that were, on average, 68 percent higher than those of black men from the same age range who remained in the region. The income gap was almost the same for women, with migrants reporting incomes that were 67 percent higher on average. However, the biggest income gap occurred between those with *less* education, reflecting the paltry wages paid to black southerners with minimal education, the limited value of a southern education in the North, and the restricted opportunities for educated black migrants to gain employment as professionals in discriminatory northern and western labor markets.²⁹

The racial discrimination of northern and western labor markets is further demonstrated through a comparison of the incomes of black southern migrants with those of white southern migrants who attained the same level of education. The data reveal that southern-born black men living in metropolitan areas in the Great Lakes region in 1949

²⁷ Gregory, “The Second Great Migration: A Historical Perspective,” 27-29.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 33.

earned an average of 79 cents for every dollar earned by southern-born white men living in the same area. The income gap was largest between college educated men, with blacks earning a mere 62 cents for each dollar earned by whites, and smallest for those with the least education, though black migrants with an eighth grade education or less still earned only 82 cents for each dollar earned by a white migrant with the same level of education. Black women fared about the same, earning 78 cents for every dollar of income for southern-born white women on average. Notably, however, education proved more valuable for black women than for their male counterparts, as college-educated black women earned 92 cents for each dollar earned by college-educated white women, while those who ended their education before high school earned only 81 cents for each dollar earned by white women with an eighth grade education or less.

The postwar years of the 1950s were marked by national prosperity, and incomes rose markedly for southern-born white migrants during the decade. However, they grew only slightly for black migrants, and the income gap between southern-born whites and blacks grew wider, especially for men. By 1959, incomes for southern-born black men were only 69 percent of southern-born white male incomes on average, a decline of 10 percent from 1949. While the gap widened for men across all education levels, the greatest increase in inequality occurred among the best educated, with college-educated black men earning incomes that were a mere 56 percent of those earned by college-educated white males. The changes for women were much less pronounced, and the level of income inequality barely changed except for the least educated black women whose

incomes were 76 percent of those for white women who never attended high school, a drop of five percent from the 1949 ratio.

The data for 1969 seem to reflect the impact of civil rights legislation that opened doors of economic opportunity to a greater number of black people during that decade. The primary beneficiaries were those with the most education. Indeed, college-educated black men saw their incomes rise from 56 percent of those earned by white college-educated men to 72 percent. It should be noted, however, that the income gap for black men with less education was still smaller at 79 cents for every dollar earned by the least educated whites. The benefits of education among black women were considerable by the end of the 1960s, as the income of college-educated southern-born black women actually exceeded the income of their white counterparts by six percent in 1969.³⁰

POSTWAR GHETTO FORMATION, A NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Overall, southern migrants to northern and western cities managed their household affairs as well as or better than black people born in the North and West, with migrants, “earning slightly higher incomes, maintaining more two-parent families, relying less on welfare services, and contributing less to prison populations than the old settlers.”³¹ Thus, the data refute the notion that the slum conditions of the urban ghettos in which black migrants were forced to reside were caused by their lack of preparedness for or their failure to adapt to the challenges of urban living. What is more, because the

³⁰ These data are taken from Table 1.4 in Gregory, “The Second Great Migration: A Historical Perspective,” 35.

³¹ Gregory, “The Second Great Migration: A Historical Perspective,” 36.

data reveal that the poverty, crime, poor health, overcrowding, and other enduring problems of life in urban ghettos were more common among those who were born in the ghetto, they suggest that such problems are a function of the ghettos themselves.

It is customary to think of ghettos in geographic terms, as locations demarcated by definable boundaries, as inert physical spaces. According to this perspective, it can only be the people who live in these places that are responsible for creating the conditions of life there. The evidence of history shows, however, that ghettos in American cities are more than mere places. They are instead physical manifestations of the interactions between American capitalism and American racism during the twentieth century, and they endure because capitalism and racism, despite the internal weaknesses of the former and determined efforts to overcome the latter, continue to serve as fundamental organizing principles according to which American society is structured.³² Additional present-day confusion about what ghettos are is raised by the altogether casual usage of the word “ghetto” as a contemporary colloquialism. Recently, it has become common to misuse the term as an adjective to suggest the inferior quality or diminished status of something, particularly in contrast to a brand-name or otherwise expensive equivalent. This usage is telling in its conflation of a space of imposed racial segregation (a ghetto), and the condition of poverty. Most often when “ghetto” is used this way, the speaker means something more accurately associated with a slum. The confusion is perhaps understandable given the interrelation of race and poverty throughout American history, and the very limited understanding of that history that most Americans command.

³² Of course, the exploitation of people of African descent in service of American capitalist development predates the twentieth century, running all the way back to the colonial era, and very much present at the founding of the republic.

And yet it is important to understand the differences between a ghetto and a slum, since not all ghettos are slums, and most slums, historically, have not been ghettos. Whereas slums are as old as American cities, racial ghettos are of a more recent vintage, coinciding with the first large-scale migration of black southerners to northern cities during the World War I era. Whereas slum districts develop through neglect, ghettos are formed and maintained through deliberate action. Moreover, as economists Daniel R. Fusfeld and Timothy Bates have argued, even as ghettos deprive their residents of opportunities for upward mobility and economic advancement, they provide benefits to certain groups living outside the ghetto:

Affluent America needs and benefits from the excluded underclass. Urban racial ghettos provide a source of low-wage labor, and the steady drain of income and resources out of the ghettos provides economic benefits to specific groups in affluent America. This relationship is sustained by a flow of income from the government into the urban ghettos, financed by the average taxpayer.³³

This predatory economic relationship, maintained through local political systems over which the residents of postwar ghettos had little, if any, influence, and safeguarded by police officers largely unrestrained in their use of violence, was central to the development of an analysis during the 1960s that described black ghettos as internal colonies of the United States.³⁴

The Second Great Migration is likewise linked with ghetto development, though the process varied considerably depending on region. Cities on the West coast that

³³ Fusfeld and Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, xiii.

³⁴ Harold Cruse advanced the notion of “domestic colonialism” to describe the relationship between black people generally and the United States as early as 1962 in his seminal essay “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American.” See, Harold W. Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” *Studies on the Left* 2, no. 3 (1962): 12-25. For the specific application of the colonial analogy to black ghettos, see, Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). For an evaluation of the ghetto-as-colony framework in consideration of the several critiques against it that had emerged in academia by the late 1960s see, Robert Blauner, “Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt,” *Social Problems* 16 no.4 (1969): 393-408.

attracted large numbers of black migrants generally had no definable black ghetto until the 1940s. Cities in the northeast, mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes regions, by contrast, already had sizable black populations due to the initial migration, and consequently, with the second migration came the creation of the second ghetto. In some cities, most notably Chicago, this process involved the development of two discreet areas within a city to which black people were limited. In other cities, the second ghetto resulted more from an expansion of the initial ghetto due to profound overcrowding in the 1940s.³⁵ It would, however, be an oversimplification to consider the formation of postwar ghettos as a continuation of the historical dynamic established during the 1910s and 1920s. While the pattern of racial segregation following large-scale in-migration of black southerners remained constant, there is more to the story. American cities were themselves dramatically transformed during the 1940s, especially the postwar years at the end of the decade. The process of decentralization remade urban America in ways that proved to be deeply consequential to the formation of postwar ghettos, most importantly by redirecting the flow of capital away from urban centers and out into the surrounding suburbs which were in almost all cases restricted through a series of contrivances to white residents only.

BLACK MIGRATION TO CLEVELAND, A DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The pattern of black migration to Cleveland mostly follows the general trends previously described, beginning with a very small black population throughout the nineteenth century that was significantly enlarged by two definable periods of large-scale

³⁵ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; reprint, 1998).

migration during the twentieth century. Black migration to Cleveland was perhaps the most dramatic from 1910 to 1930, during which time the city's black population swelled from a scant 8,448 people in 1910 to 71,899 by 1930, an increase of over 400 percent. The migration shifted the demographics of Cleveland's black community decisively as the proportion of Ohio-born black Cleveland residents dropped from 35.7 to 16.9 percent between 1910 and 1920. Not only was the black community significantly larger and more southern by 1920, but the origin of migrants shifted as well, with migrants from the Deep South states of Alabama and Georgia outpacing their counterparts from Upper South and border states who had made up the preponderance of black migrants to Cleveland before World War I. Indeed, by 1930, "Cleveland had far more black migrants from Georgia and Alabama than from any other state outside Ohio," lending the city a black southern sensibility and the nickname AlabamaNorth.³⁶

Still, the most significant consequence of the first wave of black southern migration to Cleveland was not the size of the black population increase or the Deep South origins of the new arrivals—though these played a crucial role in shifting the leadership, politics, and institutions of the black community during the 1920s and 1930s.³⁷ More importantly, at least for the purposes of this study, the World War I-era migration was met by an increase in anti-black racial discrimination and an intensification of the nascent pattern of residential segregation that had begun to emerge in Cleveland prior to World War I, both of which contributed directly to the formation of

³⁶ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 160-1; Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, Chapter 5.

³⁷ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 113; Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 161.

the city's first black ghetto in the Central Area. Census data indicate the general dispersal of African Americans throughout Cleveland before the war, with the overwhelming majority of census tracts containing a black population of 1-2 percent of the tract total. Only one of Cleveland's 158 tracts from the 1910 census was more than 20 percent black, and none were greater than 25 percent. The rapid increase in the black population between 1916 (no more than 12,000 persons) and 1920 corresponded with an increase in census tracts with higher concentrations of black residents. In fact, at least seven tracts in the 1920 census had African American populations of at least thirty percent, and two census tracts were home to black majorities. This trend toward the restriction of Cleveland's black population within several adjoining census tracts and the consolidation of the city's first black ghetto was apparent in 1930, by which time African Americans accounted for more than fifty percent of the population in 17 census tracts, and at least ninety percent of black Clevelanders lived in the Central Area, a 3.74 square mile parcel bordered by Euclid Avenue on the north, East 105th Street on the east, and Woodland Avenue to the South.³⁸

As was true nationally, the depression decade greatly reduced the number of migrants to Cleveland, and black population growth slowed markedly, increasing just 17.5 percent to 84,504 by the end of the 1930s. (See Table 1.1) Migration resumed with the expansion of Cleveland's industries in preparation for World War II. While the remarkable proportional increase in Cleveland's black population during the first migration left contemporary observers and later historians impressed by the size of the

³⁸ Ibid., 160-1.

influx, the post-depression migration was considerably larger in absolute terms, and by 1950 147,847 black people lived in Cleveland, of whom some 85,000, or 60 percent, were born in the South. More than 100,000 additional black people lived in Cleveland by 1960, bringing the total black population to 250,889, an increase of 70 percent over the decade, and marking an end to the period of explosive growth. Indeed, the black population grew by only 14.7 percent during the 1960s, adding roughly 37,000 people to total 287,871 in 1970. Given that two-thirds of the population increase during the sixties occurred in the first half of the decade, it seems clear that the Second Great Migration to Cleveland ended earlier than in some other locations, particularly since the level of black out-migration from the South remained high through the 1970s.³⁹

Table 1.1 Black Population of Cleveland, 1850-1970

Year	City Total	Black Total	Percentage Black	% Increase Total Pop	% Increase Black Pop
1850	17,034	224	1.3%		
1860	43,417	799	1.8%	154.9%	256.7%
1870	92,829	1,293	1.4%	113.8%	61.8%
1880	160,416	2,062	1.3%	72.8%	59.5%
1890	261,353	3,035	1.2%	62.9%	47.2%
1900	381,768	5,988	1.6%	46.1%	97.3%
1910	560,663	8,448	1.5%	46.9%	41.1%
1920	796,841	34,451	4.3%	42.1%	307.8%
1930	900,429	71,899	8.0%	13.0%	108.7%
1940	878,336	84,504	9.6%	-2.5%	17.5%
1950	914,808	147,847	16.2%	4.2%	75.0%
1960	876,050	250,889	28.6%	-4.2%	69.7%
1965	810,858	276,376	34.1%	-7.4%	10.2%
1970	751,046	287,871	38.3%	-14.3%	14.7%

Sources: Data for years 1850-1930 from U.S. Census Bureau Reports, 1850-1930. Cited in Kenneth Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 10.

Data for 1940-1970 from U.S. Census Bureau Reports, 1940-1970.

³⁹ Gregory estimates that nearly one million black people left the South from 1970 to 1980. See Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora*, 14-15.

Of the more than 85,000 black people who had moved to Cleveland from the South by 1950, just over 23,000 came from Alabama. One, who would figure prominently in the grassroots political activity of the 1960s, was Lewis G. Robinson, born in Decatur, Alabama in early January, 1929 to Rufus and Lillian L. Robinson. One of thirteen children, Robinson grew up during the Depression in a farming family, though in his autobiography Robinson also describes his father as “a small entrepreneur” whose frugality enabled him to purchase a ten-acre farm in 1920, a portion of which he rented to tenants, white and black. Under these circumstances, Robinson “grew up learning that everyone had to pitch in to eat.”

Every hand, no matter how small, was important in cotton picking time. Wen we finished our own cottonpicking [*sic*] we hired out at fifty cents a hundred pounds to some white farmer. My father would take us five older kids and we'd work from sunup to sundown.⁴⁰

Indeed, hard work was the formative experience of Robinson’s childhood, and he makes clear that “everybody worked in our family,” including his mother, who labored several days a week as a washerwoman for local white families, and younger siblings who routinely helped with farm chores and childcare.⁴¹

Strong-willed, independent minded, and disinclined to accept the inferior status imposed by whites, Robinson chafed against the constraints of Jim Crow Alabama, particularly as an adolescent. Determined to become a man, Robinson quit school after ninth grade to go to work. A brief stint as a welding chipper in the local shipyard ended after threats from several white co-workers. Soon after, Robinson made up his mind to

⁴⁰ Lewis G. Robinson, *The Making of a Man: An Autobiography*, (Cleveland: Green & Sons, 1971), 9.

⁴¹ Ibid.

leave the South. News spread through several local families who had previously moved to Cleveland about the possibility of earning in just twenty hours wages nearly as high as a black man in Decatur could expect to earn working full time, a situation that would leave Robinson with time for school. That prospect, plus the presence of extended family members, including his oldest brother and an aunt and uncle who were already living in Cleveland, drew Robinson to the Forest City in 1944 at the age of 15.⁴²

In certain respects, Lewis Robinson was typical of black migrants to Cleveland during the Second Great Migration. In leaving from Alabama, Robinson followed what had become a well-worn trail to Cleveland. Nearly 13,000 of the 84,504 black people residing in Cleveland in 1940 were born in Alabama. That number would grow to more than 23,000 by 1950, accounting for over 27 percent of the black southerners living in the city that year. No southern state contributed more migrants to Cleveland, though Georgia was a close second. Tennessee and Mississippi ranked a fairly distant third and forth, respectively, contributing one-half and one-third as many migrants to Cleveland as Alabama.⁴³

No matter which state they hailed from, most of the migrants to Cleveland were young people, though generally not as young as Robinson. Census micro-data for 1950 show several age clusters among southern-born black people living in Cleveland that correspond with periods of migration to the city. For black men, those aged 25 to 34 years accounted for nearly 25 percent of all southern-born black men living in Cleveland in 1950. If we include those aged 35 to 39 years, the group represented one third of all

⁴² Ibid., 20.

⁴³ See Table E.1 in Appendix E.

southern-born black men. Another cluster of men between the ages of 45 and 54 years, accounting for almost 25 percent of southern-born black men, points to the migration during the World-War I era when those men would have been in their twenties. The data for black women is similar, although the 25 to 34 age bracket by itself accounted for 29 percent of all southern-born black women in Cleveland. Including the 35-39 age group increases the figure to more than 38 percent. Black women aged 40 to 49 years accounted for 20 percent of all southern-born black women in Cleveland in 1950, suggesting that women who moved to Cleveland during the first Great Migration were younger than the men who did so.⁴⁴ Data from a survey of migrants who registered with the Ohio State Employment Service conducted in 1957 found that black men and women in their twenties constituted the majority. These data are taken from a very small sample of people (less than 1000), and are by themselves only scant evidence of a shift toward younger migrants during the 1950s. However, census data reveal that the median age of black Clevelanders dropped from 29 years in 1950 to 26.5 years in 1960. While some of that drop in median age was certainly influenced by high birth rates, it is likely that younger migrants also played a role. Further, a preponderance of younger people among the migrants to Cleveland during the 1950s and 1960s would be in keeping with the national trend.⁴⁵

The gender balance of the migration to Cleveland also reflected the norm nationally with women outnumbering men. Perhaps due to the declining number of

⁴⁴ See Table E.2 in Appendix E.

⁴⁵ Marvin B. Sussman and Eleanor K. Caplan, "Some of Cleveland's In-Migrant Job-Seekers: Part II," *Hough Area Project* 27, July, 1957, 7; Ernest C. Cooper, "The Negro in Cleveland, 1950-1963: An Analysis of the Social and Economic Characteristics of the Negro Population," June 1964, 2. This report is located in The Urban League of Cleveland Records at the Western Reserve Historical Society (hereafter, WRHS).

agricultural jobs available to black women in the South after the War, what had been an almost equal number of southern-born black men and women living in Cleveland in 1940 shifted as women arrived from the South in greater numbers. By 1950 Cleveland was home to some 44,500 southern-born black women compared to fewer than 42,000 of their male counterparts. The gender imbalance grew during the succeeding decades, such that by 1970 there were 80 southern-born black men for every 100 such women living in Cleveland. The gender imbalance was greater among migrants than the black population overall, in which there were 89 men for every 100 women.⁴⁶

The racial disparity built into the southern public education system is apparent in the education rates of white and black southern migrants to Cleveland. Battles over how much and what kind of education black southerners should receive began immediately after the Civil War. The initiative of black legislators during Reconstruction to institute the first universal and compulsory public education system in the South was subverted by the reassertion of white domination in southern politics by the end of the century. White southerners used violence to recapture and maintain their rule over southern state governments and rewrote southern state constitutions in an attempt to restore a social hierarchy based on white supremacy. The intended place of black people in that hierarchy was, of course, at the bottom. Consequently, white southerners had no interest in maintaining a system of public education that black people could use to elevate themselves, pushing instead a model of “industrial” education in which the primary lesson was one black southerners already knew well: hard work in menial occupations.

⁴⁶ For figures for migrants see Table E.2 in Appendix E. Data for the total black population of Cleveland were computed from Table 1 in, Cooper, “The Negro in Cleveland,” 25.

This situation endured well into the twentieth century, when the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision laid the groundwork for the desegregation of southern schools and raised the possibility of a decent education for black southerners.⁴⁷

Not surprisingly, then, most early black southern migrants to Cleveland arrived with limited education. Of the black migrants who were 23 years or older in 1940, 69 percent (43 percent for whites) had no more than an eighth-grade education, while a relative handful of 23 percent (39 percent for whites) had at some high school behind them, though almost half of these had not gone past ninth grade, and a scant 3 percent (18 percent for whites) had college experience. Black women migrants were slightly better educated than the men on average, with a higher proportion of high school educated among their ranks. Indeed, Lewis Robinson, arriving in Cleveland with a ninth-grade education, was the exception. Overall, the education rate of black migrants improved with time, and by 1950, 30 percent of southern-born black men and women age 23 and older had gained some high school education. The percentage of college educated black migrants more than doubled to 7 percent. While education rates increased for both men and women, higher percentages of black women than men earned secondary and post-secondary educations. Despite black gains, the disparity in educational attainment between white and black migrants endured into the 1960s. By 1970 black migrants aged 23 and older (the first generation schooled after the *Brown* decision) closed the gap significantly, with a 54 percent majority attaining a high school education and 10 percent

⁴⁷ See James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

with at least one year of college. Black men, particularly, made gains, essentially closing the gap between them and black women migrants.⁴⁸

BLACK MIGRANTS, WORK, AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN CLEVELAND

Black migrants to Cleveland left the discriminatory labor market in the South only to find a discriminatory labor market in the urban North. The Great Depression hit Cleveland with considerable force, leaving as many as 100,000 unemployed by early 1931.⁴⁹ By the end of the Depression decade, black people who had moved to Cleveland before the war continued to endure an overall unemployment rate nearly 50 percent higher than their white counterparts. The disparity between black and white women was much wider, with the unemployment rate for southern-born black women nearly four times greater than for white women. More than 80 percent of the unemployed black women were experienced workers. Black women migrants also had a slightly higher unemployment rate than black men, over 90 percent of whom were also experienced workers. It should be noted that these figures only count people in the labor force. If the those who were not in the labor force were included, the rates of unemployment would be even higher. This is particularly true for black men since more than half of those not in the labor force were listed as “unable to work,” a category that included those unable to find a job. Further, of the southern-born black men who were employed in 1940, roughly

⁴⁸ See Table E.3 in Appendix E.

⁴⁹ Carol Poh Miller and Robert Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1990*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 136.

one third owed their jobs to federal emergency work programs initiated during the Depression.⁵⁰

The mobilization for World War II provided Cleveland, a vital steel center for the nation, with a needed stimulus, boosting the demand for workers beyond what the local labor market could supply and drawing in tens of thousands of workers from other regions of the country. Unemployment rates for southern-born black Clevelanders fell by almost half for men (from 16 to 7 percent), and by nearly 60 percent for women (from 19 to 7.5 percent). The percentage of black men and women not in the labor force declined overall, and the portion of black men out of the labor force listed as “unable to work” fell by 80 percent, indicating the expanded job possibilities for black men and women during the war and subsequent period of postwar prosperity (Table E.4). Southern-born black Cleveland residents enjoyed a higher rate of employment compared to the total black population of the city, as the overall unemployment rate for black Clevelanders sat at 11 percent in 1950. The 5.7 percent unemployment rate for white Clevelanders was approximately half the rate for blacks, revealing that the prosperity of the wartime and postwar period was not shared equally.⁵¹

In addition to the racial disparity in employment rates, black migrants with jobs found themselves restricted to particular occupations, a reality shared by black Cleveland residents of all origins. Undoubtedly, at least some of the jobs open to southern-born black residents of Cleveland paid considerably higher wages than they could earn in the South. However, such jobs were not especially easy to acquire, and even then they were

⁵⁰ See Table E.4 in Appendix E.

⁵¹ Cooper, “The Negro in Cleveland,” Table 10, 34.

frequently the heaviest, dirtiest, most dangerous, or otherwise least desirable jobs available. Lewis Robinson's experience looking for work in Cleveland is illustrative of the range of possibilities many migrants could expect to encounter. Arriving in 1944 with an above-average level of education, Robinson's first job was a temporary position as a dishwasher in a downtown restaurant where he earned fifty cents an hour. Robison quickly found another job in a corner drug store with help from his uncle, though the position was part-time and paid him only \$6.50 a week. Several weeks later Robinson was back in food service, having landed a full-time job as a porter and busboy that paid fifty cents per hour with help from his network of friends and relatives. Robinson stayed on for several months, quitting after an argument with his manager. It took him two weeks to find another job loading trucks at a beverage company for forty-five cents an hour. It was "backbreaking" work, but Robinson stayed there for six months until the school year ended. Able to work full time through the summer, Robinson joined Cleveland's industrial labor force, shoveling bolts at the bolt and nut division of Republic Steel for seventy-five cents per hour, a job he kept when school resumed in the fall by working nights.⁵²

Despite his youth, Robinson's employment profile is fairly representative of black migrants to Cleveland generally who were concentrated in several occupational categories in 1940.⁵³ Among employed men, more worked as laborers (47 percent) than anything else. Another 20 percent found jobs as operatives, primarily working in unskilled trades, while roughly the same proportion filled the ranks of service workers

⁵² Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 23-32.

⁵³ Detailed data on occupation categories are in Tables E.5-E.8 in Appendix E.

outside of private households, mostly as porters. Within his first two years of living in Cleveland, Robinson held jobs in all of these categories. A relative handful of southern-born black men (7 percent) were listed as craftsmen, while fewer still held jobs as clerical workers. A select few (3 percent) occupied the ranks of professional and technical workers. White southern migrants fared better, with men generally sinking no lower than operatives (though 9 percent worked as laborers), and occupying jobs in white-collar categories at a much higher rate than black men. Indeed, fully 34 percent of white men born in the south worked in white-collar job categories. Black women found themselves restricted to work in the service sector. Domestic service in private households accounted for almost 50 percent of employed black women migrants, while those in the service sector outside private homes, primarily charwomen and cleaners, made up another 25 percent. The final quarter held jobs as operatives, many in laundry or dry cleaning. Less than a third of white female migrants were in the labor force in 1940, an those who were worked primarily as clerical workers or in sales, though a lesser number worked in the service sector as domestics and waitresses.

The shifting labor market during the war did indeed open the doors to some job categories for southern-born blacks that had previously been closed to them. By 1950, fewer black men worked as laborers, though this category still accounted for 30 percent of those with jobs. The proportion working as operatives increased by nearly a third to include 28 percent of employed black male migrants, and the ranks of craftsmen grew slightly to 12 percent. Perhaps most impressively, southern-born black men made considerable gains among the ranks of managers, officials and proprietors, a category

accounting for less than 1 percent of those employed in 1940 which had grown to encompass 6 percent by 1950. While black male migrants made modest gains in white collar employment, southern-born white men actually lost ground, though only slightly. Further, the decline in white collar workers among white male migrants coincided with an increase in skilled blue collar workers as the percentage of craftsmen grew, likely reflecting the large influx of workers to fill jobs in the war industries rather than a decline in status for white migrant workers generally. Indeed, the percentage of southern-born white men working as laborers also declined during the decade. Southern-born black women saw fewer changes in their job opportunities during the 1940s, and most were still working in domestic service which accounted for 30 percent of those in the labor force. Almost as many (29 percent) were service workers outside of private households. While this shift may have resulted in more favorable working conditions for some black women who left domestic service, the jobs available to them outside of private homes, primarily hospital attendants, charwomen, and waitresses, were far from glamorous. Like the men, black women migrants gained limited entry to professional occupations in larger numbers, especially nursing, as well as other kinds of white collar work. Southern-born black women also joined the labor force at a much faster rate than their white counterparts. Overall, the labor force distribution of black migrants to Cleveland was the same as the distribution for all black Cleveland residents.

While detailed gender-differentiated data are lacking for 1960, census data reveal that the general trends did not change much. Black workers continued to make slight gains, with a higher percentage employed as operatives and fewer employed as laborers.

Still, service work accounted for the greatest percentage of black workers at just over 26 percent. Fewer than 10 percent worked as craftsmen or foremen, though nearly as many had joined the ranks of clerical workers. White workers maintained their hold on the best jobs, as more than 60 percent held jobs as skilled laborers and white collar workers.⁵⁴

The racial disparity in employment is reflected in the income differential between black and white southern migrants.⁵⁵ As white migrants were more evenly dispersed throughout the range of occupational categories, they were also evenly spread throughout income groupings, so evenly spread, in fact, that the white migrant population in 1940 can be neatly divided into quintiles based on wage and salary income levels. Eighteen percent of southern-born whites earned less than \$500, accounting for the poorest quintile. Another 19 percent earned incomes from \$500 to \$999. Those earning between \$1000 and \$1499 accounted for another 19 percent of white migrants, as did those with incomes from \$1500 to \$1999. The remaining 25 percent brought home wage and salary incomes of \$2000 or more, including an elite 5 percent with incomes over \$5000. Black southern migrants by contrast were much more heavily concentrated among the lowest income groups. The poorest quintile accounted for a third of the black migrant population, though the majority earned slightly more, with 51 percent earning incomes from \$500 to \$999, placing them in the second quintile. An additional 14 percent managed incomes from \$1000 to \$1499, while just 2 percent earned between \$1500 and \$1999. Fewer than one percent of southern-born blacks in Cleveland earned between \$2000 and \$2499, and none earned more.

⁵⁴ Cooper, "The Negro in Cleveland," Table 9, 33.

⁵⁵ See Table E.9 in Appendix E.

The stimulus of the war decade helped boost black incomes just as it provided access to better jobs. Indeed, by 1950 the income distribution of black migrants was considerably more even than it was in 1940, although over 30 percent earned less than \$1000 and only 12 percent earned more than \$3000. A majority of 55 percent earned incomes from \$1000 to \$3000. A slim majority of white migrants (50 percent) also earned incomes between \$100 and \$3000, however the remainder of the white migrant population was more equally balanced between those earning less than \$1000 (24 percent) and those earning more than \$3000 (26 percent).

Further evidence that the income disparity between black and white migrants was rooted in the racially discriminatory labor markets can be found in data comparing the incomes of white and black workers while controlling for education. Data for Cleveland are lacking, however a state-level comparison of the median income of white and nonwhite men 25 years and older reveals that whites earned more than nonwhites at every education level, and the gap grew wider as the level of education increased.⁵⁶ Given that this trend also held regionally for black and white southerners who relocated during the World War II-era migration, there is little reason to think that Cleveland would provide the exception. Instead it seems likely that most black southerners with education had little opportunity to find jobs in areas where they could apply it.

⁵⁶ Cooper, "The Negro in Cleveland," Table 6, 30.

CITY WITHIN A CITY: RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION IN CLEVELAND

Perhaps the most significant difference between the experiences of black and white southern migrants was the settlement patterns of both groups. Southern-born migrants of both races who moved to Cleveland during the war decade encountered the Forest City in the midst of a major transition. Housing construction was dramatically slowed by the Depression and halted by the war, creating a severe housing shortage in Cleveland and most other large American cities in the Great Lakes, mid-Atlantic, and northeast regions. Pent up demand for housing after the war was one factor that helped to fuel the residential building boom in the suburbs around Cleveland in the second half of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s, providing a desired escape from the din and grime and congestion of the city proper for some residents. Some, but not all. Settlement patterns of southern-born migrants reveal the racial discrimination operating at many levels of the real estate market that combined to keep Cleveland's suburbs nearly all-white. Of the nearly 90,000 black migrants who moved to the Cleveland metropolitan area from the South during the 1940s, more than 85,000, or 96 percent, settled in the inner city. Only 62 percent of white southern migrants did likewise.⁵⁷

The heavy concentration of black migrants within the central city cannot be attributed to preference or to an inability to afford homes in the outlying areas and the surrounding suburbs, as the determined efforts of some prosperous black families to buy or build homes in such locations makes clear. Those who succeeded frequently found that moving to the suburbs did not necessarily mean moving to a racially integrated area, as

⁵⁷ See Table E.1 in Appendix E.

lending and construction practices combined to segregate Cleveland's suburbs. Cleveland's major (white controlled) banks developed reputations for failing to make loans to prospective black home buyers unless the desired home was in a majority-black neighborhood. This was true even for buyers who were well qualified. Dr. L. Morris Jones, a black physician who operated the only medical practice in Hough, and his wife Dr. Adrienne L. Jones, for example, were repeatedly frustrated in their attempts to secure financing to build a home in the Ludlow neighborhood on the border of Cleveland and Shaker Heights.⁵⁸ In some cases, contractors built entire suburban developments intended for black residents. Black families who found themselves in the exceptional circumstances of buying or building a home in a predominantly white area could expect to encounter overt hostility from their would-be neighbors. The purchase of a home on a previously all-white street in the Lee-Harvard area by Wendell and Genevieve Stewart, a black couple, in 1953, inspired a "storm of protest" involving as many as 500 local whites who gathered in a series of "mass meetings" to determine how to respond. Some attempted to repurchase the house while others threatened violence as a "lesson" to dissuade both would-be white sellers and black buyers. The conflagration eventually

⁵⁸ Dr. L. Morris Jones and Dr. Adrienne L. Jones, interview by the author, November 3, 2010. The Joneses eventually secured financing through a black-owned savings and loan institution. The Ludlow neighborhood eventually turned into a *cause célèbre* for housing integration nationally. Despite initially following the usual pattern of white panic selling after the arrival of the first black family in 1955, some of Ludlow's remaining white residents formed the Ludlow Community Association (LCA) to stem the transition from white to black that was well underway by 1957. Ironically, the LCA's efforts to maintain a racially integrated neighborhood were primarily geared toward aiding prospective white home buyers, even going so far as to form a development fund, the Ludlow Co., to provide additional financing to white homebuyers who could not afford a down payment. See Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland: From George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1972), 330-31, 355; Joseph P. Black, "Ludlow—A Lesson in Integration," *The Readers Digest*, September 1968. An excellent dissertation has been written on the changing racial demographics of selected neighborhoods of southeast Cleveland that border neighboring suburbs. See, Todd M. Michney, "Changing Neighborhoods: Race and Upward mobility in Southeast Cleveland, 1930-1980" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2004), 180-197.

involved the mayor who defended the Stewarts' rights and provided police protection for the couple and their new home. Police protection was removed after several months and some of the Stewart's new neighbors made good on their threats, throwing a brick through a front window, and smearing the house with paint. Violence proceeded more quickly in another incident the next year, when a house built for John Pegg, a black attorney, in the Ludlow neighborhood adjacent to the tony suburb of Shaker Heights was bombed while it was under construction in January, 1956.⁵⁹ Despite the hysteria of suburban whites about a feared influx of black people, the number of black families able to move to any suburban area remained extremely small. In 1960, 98 percent of the black people residing in Cuyahoga County lived within the city limits of Cleveland, and 90 percent lived in predominantly black areas "where two-thirds or more of the population was also [black]."⁶⁰

POSTWAR GHETTO FORMATION IN CLEVELAND, BEYOND WHITE FLIGHT

The dynamics of residential settlement for most black migrants described above were obviously a crucial part of postwar ghetto formation in Cleveland. With no real alternatives, southern blacks who arrived in Cleveland during the 1940s crowded into the Central Area, the space in which the city's first black ghetto had developed by 1930. Many studies of postwar urban ghetto development emphasize "white flight" to the suburbs and the spread of the black population into the abandoned neighborhoods

⁵⁹ Michney, "Changing Neighborhoods," 210-217; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 331; "White Neighbors Help Clean Up Pegg Home Bomb Damage," *Call and Post*, January 14, 1956, city edition.

⁶⁰ Cooper, "The Negro in Cleveland," 3.

beginning with those contiguous to the ghetto. A cursory glance at the residential patterns of black Clevelanders in the postwar period appears to confirm the pattern, as the black population in the Hough neighborhood immediately north of Central grew from approximately four percent in 1950 to 74 percent by 1960. Five years later, even though fewer black people lived there, Hough was 88 percent black. The area's white population of 18,454 in 1960 shrank to just 6,808 in half a decade.⁶¹ The fact that Hough became the poster child for urban blight in the 1960s surely helped strengthen the perception that urban decline was a phenomenon of that decade. But, as Thomas J. Sugrue has pointed out, even if the conditions associated with "urban crisis" did not garner the nation's attention until the 1960s, their roots lay in the transformation of cities during prior decades. As the example of Cleveland makes clear, much more was involved in the process of postwar ghetto formation than white flight, and many of the forces that shaped the postwar ghetto were likewise responsible for the decline in Cleveland's fortunes overall.

As noted above, the black people who moved to Cleveland during the 1940s arrived at a time of transition. And even though the dominant narrative of American urban history portrays the war decade as a time of resurrection for the country's industrial centers, paving the way to decades of future prosperity, the economic history of Cleveland reveals a different reality. A brief overview of that history will help situate the prevailing circumstances of postwar Cleveland in a somewhat different context,

⁶¹ Cooper, "The Negro in Cleveland," Table 16, 40; Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of Selected Neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio: April 1965*, Series P-23, no. 21, Table 1; Additional information on the transformation of Hough during the 1950s can be found in Marvin B. Sussman, R. Clyde White, and Eleanor Caplan, *Hough, Cleveland, Ohio: A Study of Social Life and Change* (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1959).

demonstrating that the decline of Cleveland began well before the War, and suggesting that rather than providing a resurrection, the economic boost during the 1940s enabled the resumption of the very processes that drove the city into decline in the postwar era.

While economic forces were only one factor in the postwar transformation of Cleveland, they were especially decisive. A first cause of sorts, the economy has been understood by historians of Cleveland as the “driving force of change” from the time of the city’s founding. In fact, economic considerations were fundamental to the initial settlement and development of Cleveland, as the area that would grow to be the sixth largest city in the country began its life as a commercial enterprise of the Connecticut Land Company in 1796. The investors who formed the Connecticut Land Company, having bought the Western Reserve tract of the Northwest territory from the state of Connecticut in September 1795, noted the commercial promise of the site where Cleveland would eventually take shape, with its proximity to the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie affording it “the best prospect of water communication” in the area.⁶²

In the spring of 1796, Moses Cleaveland led a surveying party of more than 40 to the Western Reserve. He was charged by the Connecticut Land Company with selecting a suitable site for a capital of the Reserve, and directed to lay out the principal town as quickly as possible. Reflecting the heritage of the surveyors, the site plan was designed to conform to the New England model of an agricultural village. Lots of land were laid out on a tidy grid and offered for sale by 1797, but, because the primary concern of the

⁶² Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History*, 7. I have relied heavily on this source for much of the information on the economic development of Cleveland as there are few other good sources, and none that are as convenient. For more on the influence of New England town planning on early urban development, see Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, Chapter 1).

investors of the Connecticut Land Company was quick sale of the land for profit, few improvements were granted by the company to entice settlers, and there were few willing buyers. Further, the settlement was initially challenged by its location near the floodplain at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River which sustained a series of malarial swamps, threatening the health of early arrivals. In 1800, then, Cleveland was an isolated patch of wilderness on the Western frontier of the United States with a population of one. From this inauspicious beginning Cleveland grew slightly to include 57 residents by 1810. One year later a visitor to Cleveland noted the ““16 dwellings, 2 taverns, 2 stores, and 1 school”” that comprised the built environment of the settlement, and remarked on the nascent economy organized around a meager trade that ““was limited to salt, a little flour, pork, [and] whiskey.””⁶³

Indian removal from the Reserve lands west of the Cuyahoga River opened that territory to further white settlement, a development which, along with the building of several roads connecting Cleveland with nearby settlements in New York and Pennsylvania, an increase in the number of commercial ships on Lake Erie, and plans to build a canal from the Ohio River to Lake Erie with its northern terminus in Cleveland, contributed significantly to Cleveland's transition from a rough frontier settlement to an established commercial village and county seat by the mid-1820s. The paltry commerce of 1811 had expanded in the interim as “trading posts were replaced by stores in growing numbers after the war of 1812 ... merchants built warehouses as early as 1815 [and] the Commercial Bank of Lake Erie opened in 1816,” all of which spurred the economic

⁶³ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History*, 7-20.

growth that produced exports in excess of \$38,000 and afforded imports in excess of \$196,000 in 1825.⁶⁴

The Ohio and Erie Canal drove economic development in Cleveland during the antebellum era, firmly establishing the emerging city as the commercial center of the region. The canal provided the only route to Lake Erie, and from there to the markets of the eastern cities, for goods and produce from the hinterlands of Ohio south of Cleveland. In 1830 the canal handled over 3 million pounds of cargo before catapulting to 10 million pounds in 1834, and 19 million pounds in 1838. Lake traffic also grew as, “vessels increased in both number and size, and nearly 50 vessels made regular stops at Cleveland with passengers and freight by the mid-1840s, [by which time] Cleveland joined Detroit and Buffalo as the dominant Great Lakes ports.”⁶⁵

The economic opportunities afforded by the expansion of commercial activity in Cleveland throughout the antebellum period helped make it an attractive destination for European immigrants who began arriving in the area by 1830. Although American-born whites accounted for 96 percent of the population in that year, at least 25 percent of the 1840 population was foreign born, with the earliest arrivals hailing from Ireland, Scotland, and Germany. A small community of free black people had also grown up during these years, establishing a church in 1830 and a school in 1832, followed by a young men's union, a lecture series and a library. By 1845 “there were 56 black people

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19-26.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34-5.

from twenty families who had accumulated property worth \$55,000 since 1833 and were employed as canal boat owners and as stewards on boats.”⁶⁶

The city’s emergence as a commercial port helped spark its maturation into a national urban center by the eve of the Civil War, an event which “found Cleveland a commercial city and left it a manufacturing city.”⁶⁷ Beginning the decade with a population of 43,417, Cleveland in 1860 was “a city of merchants, clerks, teamsters, and draymen...[who worked in] small shops, docks and warehouses.” The city’s 18 hotels and dozens of boarding houses reflected the transitory character of the population, with merchants, businessmen, and others passing through the city to buy and sell their wares, and pointed to an increase in immigration from Europe, as the growth of the city increased the demand for labor—a dynamic that would only intensify with the dawning of industry. A sign of things to come, by 1860 five railroads operated in and out of the city, accelerating the movement of goods from Cleveland to the eastern states and expanding access for Cleveland’s burgeoning industries to the coal and oil deposits in western Pennsylvania that would soon be at the center of the largest economic boom in Cleveland’s history. Cleveland was ideally located geographically to take advantage of the regional economic transformation wrought by the industrial revolution and its replacement of human power with machine power which allowed the northern states to expand their productive capacities dramatically during the second half of the nineteenth century. Because the city was connected to major rail and water routes, it was “in an ideal

⁶⁶ Ibid., 39-40.

⁶⁷ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland A Concise History*, 69, quoting Crisfield Johnson, *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio ... with Portraits and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: D.W. Ensign & Co., 1879).

position to attract those industries that depended on an abundance of raw materials and ready access to the nation's markets." By 1865, Cleveland was home to thirty oil refineries and fourteen iron rolling mills.⁶⁸

It is tempting to read the postbellum history of economic development in Cleveland according to the conventional boom-and-bust narrative applied to the history of industrial capitalism in the U.S., with industrial expansion fueling a prosperity only occasionally interrupted by recessionary "panics" through the 1920s until it was almost completely arrested by the shock of economic collapse during the Great Depression, and then resurrected by World War II and wartime demand for materiel before ultimately succumbing to a gradual decline during the postwar years. However, even though the economic development of Cleveland overlaps with this narrative at certain points, it is ultimately misleading as an explanation of the origins of urban decline in the twentieth century. In Cleveland, the powerhouse of postbellum industrial production did indeed fuel rapid economic expansion, population growth, technological innovation, and infrastructure development, as the commercial village brought to life by the opening of the Ohio and Erie Canal was rebuilt in steel and stone, rising to become "one of the outstanding manufacturing centers in the world" and the sixth most populous city in the nation by 1910. Such was the trajectory along which Cleveland continued to develop through the next two decades. As the city grew in wealth, it also grew in population, as immigrants from Europe and migrants from the southern United States were drawn in by the demand for labor. Cleveland also grew to encompass more land area through the

⁶⁸ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland A Concise History*, 69-71.

annexation of adjoining towns. By 1920, members of Cleveland's industrial ruling class were put off as much by the noise and air pollution from their refineries, foundries, and mills as by the habits and customs of Cleveland's new arrivals from whom they desired an appropriate social distance. Accordingly, the elites of Cleveland abandoned their mansions along Millionaires' Row (a one-and-a-half-mile-long stretch of Euclid Avenue that was home to some of the wealthiest men in the country) and—initiating a trend that future generations of upwardly-mobile Clevelanders would seek to emulate—fled the city for the newly-built suburbs.⁶⁹

And here is the point of departure from the standard narrative. Conditions in Cleveland during the 1910s and 1920s foreshadowed those of the 1940s and 1950s in certain important ways. Both periods featured a dramatic influx of migrants, and, as would happen to black migrants in the 1950s, European immigrants at the turn of the century were crowded into areas that quickly transformed from respectable residential areas into slums. In a preview of the process that would remake Hough in the 1950s, “landlords in the city’s core commonly subdivided single-family houses to meet the insatiable demand of new immigrants for cheap housing” at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷⁰ The intensification of blight in the city center fueled the flight of upwardly mobile Clevelanders to the suburbs, while improvements in public transportation aided the settlement of the city’s inner-ring “streetcar suburbs.” Indeed, the population of Shaker Heights, the most prestigious (and exclusive) suburban development of the period, doubled in the decade after streetcar service between it and

⁶⁹ Ibid., 79, 100-25.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 102.

downtown Cleveland was initiated in 1920. With the advent of the automobile, growth of the suburbs began to outpace that of the city during the decade after World War I. Further, although Cleveland continued to grow in population and land area prior to the Great War, the divide between the city and its newly established suburbs became more stark during the 1920s as, “suburban voters began rejecting bids for annexation to Cleveland.” By 1930, the four largest inner-ring suburbs collectively accounted for 15 percent of the population of Cuyahoga County. They had made up only 4 percent in 1910. Neither were the suburbs merely bedroom communities for Cleveland. While the main industries remained in the city center, commercial development in the suburbs began with the construction of “the first major stores and shopping areas to be built outside of the downtown area” at the end of the 1920s. Given these trends, it is not surprising that an analysis of census tracts in Cleveland and its four primary suburbs published in 1931 revealed that, “a disparity in wealth between the city and the suburbs was already an established fact.”⁷¹

The process of decentralization and the resultant transfer of people and wealth from the city to the suburbs triggering a period of urban decline that are commonly associated with the decades after World War II were, thus, operating in the Cleveland metropolitan area prior to the onset of the Great Depression. The economic crisis dealt a severe blow to the city’s fortunes, leading Cleveland financier and John D. Rockefeller protege Cyrus Eaton to claim that no city had been damaged more—an assertion in line with scholarly opinion that the Depression decade marked a watershed in the city’s

⁷¹ Ibid., 129-42.

history, bringing an “end to prosperity” from which Cleveland would never recover.⁷²

Whatever the longterm effects, it is clear that the collapse of capitalism in the 1930s brought the process of decentralization in Cleveland to an abrupt halt.

Viewed from this perspective, the events of the post-World War II decades take on a different appearance. Rather than initiating it, Cleveland's economic resurgence during the 1940s allowed for the *resumption* of decentralization and the attendant outflow of wealth, with the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce admitting in 1941 that, “most people who live in Cleveland are anxious to move to the suburbs.”⁷³ Although new home construction was delayed by the wartime shortages of laborers and materials, the pent-up demand for housing outside the city limits fueled the postwar building boom of Cleveland’s suburbs, where four new houses were built for every one built in the city. This development was spurred by federal mortgage guarantees that greatly expanded the number of prospective white home buyers, effectively subsidizing the accumulation of wealth among white homeowners who moved beyond the city limits. Suburban relocation was not confined to Cleveland’s residents alone, however. The aspect of decentralization most damaging to Cleveland’s postwar fortunes was the relocation of industry—and the jobs provided thereby—from the city center to its outer limits. Buoyed by the resurgent growth of demand during the war, the owners of Cleveland’s industries looked forward optimistically to a prosperous future and collectively invested \$1.7 billion in postwar industrial expansion. Of that total, however, \$1 billion was spent in the suburbs.

⁷² Ibid., 131.

⁷³ Quoted in Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History*, 147.

Likewise, 100,000 of the 170,000 new jobs created by that expansion were located outside the city.⁷⁴

The residential and business decentralization following the war that proved so crucial to the formation of postwar ghettos involved more than the machinations of capitalist economics and the racial prejudices of whites. The shock of the Depression indirectly aided the intensification of decentralization in the postwar period, as concerns over an economic slowdown after the war guided policy decisions in ways that would have profound consequences for the city's decline by the 1960s. Business and political leaders in Cleveland and other centers of national economic power worried about the possibility of a postwar economic slump even before the fighting was over. The Postwar Planning Council was organized in Cleveland in 1943 to prepare the city for the transition to a peacetime economy. The end of the war would mean a reduction in industrial production, and Cleveland's leaders sought other ways to keep workers employed. The public works panel of the Cleveland Planning Council proposed taking up the expected slack with large-scale infrastructure development, and advocated the construction of a local freeway system (originally proposed before the war) "as the one public works project that would absorb the first impact of the suspension of war work."⁷⁵ While it may have come early in Cleveland, the construction of major infrastructure became a national priority in the 1950s, the largest component of which was the construction of the interstate highway system following the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1956.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 150-52.

In addition to providing jobs for blue-collar workers after the war, highway construction stimulated the economic growth of the suburbs at the expense of the cities, which, when combined with the previously-described racial discrimination in employment that kept the overwhelming majority of black workers in the lowest occupational categories, had dire consequences for black Clevelanders. As the history of Cleveland's economic development makes clear, the city grew to prosperity because it was well connected to other regions of the country by transportation infrastructure, first water, then rail. The construction of freeways released manufacturers from the need to locate in the urban centers that had grown up around those earlier forms of transportation, while changes in the manufacturing process itself, particularly the shift to a horizontal production flow, provided further incentive to move production facilities to suburban districts where the relative abundance of undeveloped land allowed sprawling, single-story plants to be built more inexpensively than was possible in the congested city center. Not all jobs left the central city, however. Postwar changes in the structure and focus of large corporations concentrated administrative and management functions in the city centers, which in turn stimulated the growth of firms providing business services—law firms, large banks, accounting firms, advertising agencies, and similar professions. Thus, as blue-collar jobs left the city, white-collar jobs were added.⁷⁶ Describing this pattern and its consequences for black people in Cleveland, a 1963 Urban League report noted with obvious concern that:

Some 80,000 factory blue-collar jobs, mainly in heavy industry—steel mill, foundry, machinery—have disappeared from the Cleveland area, while at the same time, some 30,000

⁷⁶ For additional detail on these processes see, Fusfeld and Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, Chapter 8.

non-factory white-collar jobs were making [an] appearance on the labor market. Since World War II, the proportion of Negro workers in these declining industries has been increasing at an alarming rate.⁷⁷

Further, blue-collar job growth in the postwar period centered around construction and the building trades in which black Clevelanders were woefully underrepresented. There is a long history to racial discrimination in organized labor, especially the craft unions, in the United States, and data for 1966 reveal that little had changed in Cleveland, even after the legislative victories of the Civil Rights movement had been achieved. Of the 7,786 members of five key building trades union locals—Electrical Workers, Sheet Metal Workers, Ironworkers, Plumbers, and Pipe Fitters—in Cleveland, 55, or 0.7 percent, were black.⁷⁸

Postwar economic development in the Cleveland metropolitan area not only left the majority of black workers marginalized from the reconfigured labor market, as urban renewal policies also displaced black residents by the thousands and deepened residential segregation by race in the city. One hundred fourteen acres in the city's near East side (comprising the western most portion of the Central Area) were designated as blighted and slated for clearance. Over 1,800 families (95 percent nonwhite) were displaced after the area was razed and the city was unable to attract any private investors interested in redeveloping it. The site eventually became home to St. Vincent's Charity Hospital, Cuyahoga Community College, and a small public housing project. Indeed, public

⁷⁷ Cooper, "The Negro in Cleveland," 12.

⁷⁸ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 788. On the matter of racial discrimination in building trades unions in Cleveland prior to the 1960s see, Joint Committee on Housing, *Study and Investigation of Housing: Hearings before the Joint Committee on Housing*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., October 21, 1947, 280-82, 302-317.

housing projects comprised the entirety of new housing built during Cleveland's various urban renewal projects, and here, too, segregation prevailed. While the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) had jurisdiction over Cleveland and its suburbs, all of the eleven housing projects (called "estates") built under the auspices of the CMHA were located in the city.⁷⁹ Beyond geographic segregation, CMHA estates were racially segregated as well, despite a 1949 city ordinance prohibiting the selection and assignment of tenants. By 1965, all eleven of the estates were occupied predominantly by members of one racial group. Whites made up 75 percent or more of the residents in eight of the estates (and 100 percent of the residents in one of those eight), while black residents accounted for over 99 percent of the residents in the remaining three estates. Overall, more than 99 percent of the white people residing in CMHA public housing lived in predominantly white estates, whereas 81 percent of their black counterparts resided in predominantly black estates. The remaining 19 percent of black public housing residents lived in one of the predominantly white estates.⁸⁰

The destruction of residential areas through urban renewal also had a deleterious effect on local businesses, many black-owned. Morris Thorington, Jr., owner of a neighborhood convenience store on Hough avenue, experienced the effects firsthand, stating flatly:

It is killing my business. All they've done down there in the matter of urban renewal is chase people over into Glenville and other areas and made slums out of them; tear down a few

⁷⁹ See Todd Michney, "Changing Neighborhoods" for an account of the political battles waged by whites in southeast Cleveland to prevent the construction of public housing projects in their neighborhoods.

⁸⁰ See, United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 696-712.

houses, make the streets more deserted, fewer people and more vulnerable to hoodlums ... I've lost 48 families from an area of a block within my store.⁸¹

"As for urban renewal," Thorington concluded, "this is a joke."

This was the Cleveland several hundred thousand black southerners moved to after World War II. Excluded from newly built suburban developments and refused housing in majority-white areas of the city, migrants crammed into the already overcrowded Central Area or else found living quarters in an adjoining neighborhood. Despite the spread of the black population into these areas, their arrival was either preceded or quickly followed by the evacuation of white residents, and rates of residential segregation by race remained high. The transition of Hough between 1950 (3.9 percent black) and 1960 (74 percent black) is the most striking example of this pattern, though black people also moved from Central to the Glenville neighborhood further to the northeast, and, in smaller numbers, to several neighborhoods, including Mount Pleasant, Ludlow, Lee-Harvard, Lee-Seville, and Corlett, bordering the suburbs to the southeast, as well.

White property owners realized the potential to profit handsomely from the dual housing market created by residential segregation as the ghetto expanded. With nowhere else to live, the demand for housing remained high among black Clevelanders and landlords increasingly met the demand by carving up homes that had been built in the 1920s as large, single-family dwellings into "efficiency" apartments. A house built to shelter one family would instead become home to several, and black Clevelanders at

⁸¹ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 37.

every income level endured substantially higher rates of overcrowding than whites. Black tenants (over 70 percent of the black population were renters) also paid a higher proportion of their incomes for housing than whites, encouraging some families to “double up” to afford the rent payments. And they generally paid for lower quality accommodations, being “twice as likely as whites to live in substandard housing if they were renters, [and] almost four times as likely if they were homeowners.”⁸² One former resident of an apartment in the Central Area reported living with “mice as big as cats,” along with a host of other problems:

The basement was full of water. We had about six inches of water that had been down there for three months. I kept complaining to the realty company about the water and then it started to smelling and I had to take my children to my mother’s house ... The kitchen ceiling—we had a big hole in there. When it rained we had to put pots and pans under that. Plus the dining room the same way.⁸³

Another woman described the frustration involved in attempting have such problems fixed. “When you start complaining,” she explained, “...no one seems to want to own the building ... The only time anybody really wants the building is when it is time to pay rent and after then nobody wants the building.”⁸⁴ More than simply inconvenient or unpleasant, data from an Urban League study made clear that such living conditions had “serious effects on the level of health in the Negro community,” with “higher rates of infectious morbidity and diseases of early infancy [prevalent] in those segments of the

⁸² Cooper, “The Negro in Cleveland,” Table 17, 15-19.

⁸³ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 60.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 30.

predominately Negro areas which are suffering from overcrowded housing, poor sanitation, [and] chronic unemployment.”⁸⁵

Maps of Cleveland compiled from census tract data portray the consequences of these postwar dynamics in graphic terms, revealing the expansion of the black ghetto which fanned out from the Central Area to the north and northeast encompassing the neighborhoods of Hough and Glenville, and to the south and southeast, incorporating the Kinsman neighborhood and creeping all the way to Mount Pleasant, Lee-Harvard, Lee-Seville, and Corlett on the city’s eastern limits, where middle-class blacks could not quite escape it. Also visible is the overlapping concentration of poverty in an area spanning from Central through Hough and into Glenville, even though some black families with higher incomes lived there as well.⁸⁶

Stuck on the margins of the economy, trapped in segregated neighborhoods marred by an unchecked advance of blight, forced to send their children to overcrowded neighborhood schools, the black community in Cleveland faced a daunting array of challenges by 1960. As the decade opened, influenced in part by the emergence of civil rights struggle elsewhere in the country—especially the early direct action campaigns in the South, where many black Clevelanders maintained family or kinship ties—a number of new organizations operating at the grassroots level would rise to confront them.

⁸⁵ Cooper, “The Negro in Cleveland,” Table 29, 53.

⁸⁶ See Figures A.1-A.6 in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 2

ROOTS: CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST AND THE RISE OF REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM IN ALABAMA NORTH

Black southerners who migrated to Cleveland after World War II joined a multifaceted community whose origins dated nearly as far back as the founding of the city itself. Although no black people are known to have settled in Cleveland until George Peake arrived with his family in 1809, a more itinerant presence was recorded several years earlier when, in 1806, a fugitive slave named Ben was rescued from a shipwreck in Lake Erie and brought to Cleveland to convalesce. Earlier still, a “Negro hunter and trapper with a cabin on Buffalo Creek,” named Joseph Hodge, known also as Black Joe, guided Moses Cleaveland and his exploratory party from Buffalo, New York through the Seneca lands at the northwestern edge of present-day Pennsylvania to the boundary of the Western Reserve, thus playing an instrumental role in the city’s founding in 1796.¹

In addition to a longstanding presence, by 1960 the black community in Cleveland could lay claim to an enduring tradition of militant political struggle. Indeed, the grassroots political action of black Clevelanders who formed new organizations

¹Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland: From George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1967* (Washington, D.C.: The Associate Publishers, 1972), 5-6, 35-41. According to Davis, Joe Hodge was, “believed to have been a runaway slave,” as well as a man with numerous talents. Hodge’s knowledge of the land and waterways between Buffalo and the Western Reserve, as well as his apparent ability to converse with the Seneca indigenous to the area, were the basis for the invaluable services he provided to Cleaveland’s company as a guide and interpreter. Davis also sheds some insight into fugitive slave Ben who was marooned near the shore of Lake Erie when the “small sailing vessel” he was aboard was shipwrecked during a storm in 1806. Rescued by French-Canadian trappers, Ben, the only person to survive, was brought to an inn run by Lorenzo Carter, “a militia captain, postmaster, the marshall, and general conservator of the peace,” in Cleveland, who reportedly maintained an opposition to slavery, though no particular affinity for black people. After an attempt by his owners to reclaim Ben as their property was foiled by “two highwaymen” apparently associated with Carter, Ben remained in the area, though he, “disappeared from public view,” and lived, “in a shack concealed in the woods,” outside Cleveland. George Peake, a man of obvious ingenuity, amassed considerable property in relatively short order, purchasing just over 103 acres of land in 1811 which he subsequently divided among his sons. An inventor as well as farmer, Peake developed a hand mill for processing grain which saved its adopters time as well as labor.

during the early 1960s to challenge residential segregation and substandard housing conditions; confront *de facto* segregation and overcrowding in public schools; open employment opportunities in businesses that relied on black patronage, expand access to the ranks of organized labor, and improve job training initiatives for black workers; and reform welfare policies that were inadequate in meeting the needs of families; contributed to a struggle that had persisted in the city for well over a century. In Cleveland, as elsewhere, the black community was not monolithic in its political orientation. Moreover, people frequently refashioned their political ideas in response to new information or transformative experiences, while others, concerned more about practical realities than doctrinal purity, routinely held positions drawn from seemingly divergent schools of thought. Nevertheless, as black Clevelanders pursued a broad range of strategies to improve the conditions of their lives and their prospects for a better future during the 1960s, their efforts drew from and were shaped by established political traditions within the black community. Those traditions, including an integrationist orientation primarily concerned with securing equal rights as American citizens and unfettered access to public accommodations, as well as an inward-facing nationalist perspective that promoted an ethos of self determination and prioritized the development of black community institutions, were, in turn, undergirded by longstanding social and economic divisions within the black community. As the following brief overview of the history of black political struggle in Cleveland indicates, those divisions were sharpest during periods of black migration to the city when large influxes of black southerners shifted the culture and demographics of the existing black community.

BLACK POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN CLEVELAND, AN OVERVIEW

Cleveland's black population increased slowly throughout the antebellum years. From a relative handful of fourteen in 1810, the number of black residents expanded to fifty-four by 1820. Growth slowed during the next decade, with the black population amounting to only seventy-six in 1830. Although Ohio had entered the Union as a free state after the delegates at the state Constitutional Convention in 1802 prohibited slavery (by a razor-thin, one-vote margin), it was not particularly hospitable or welcoming to black newcomers. On the contrary, provisions in the state constitution severely curtailed the political rights of black residents who were denied the franchise along with the right to testify against whites in court, restricted from holding public office, and prevented from serving in the militia. The subsequent passage of state Black Laws added additional burdens, requiring that blacks wishing to settle in the state post a \$500 bond and provide written legal proof of their free status to a county clerk; imposing penalties on anyone who hired a black person who had not filed a certificate of freedom; and restricting blacks from serving on juries, attending public schools, and intermarrying with whites. In the judgement of one historian, the prevailing consensus among the white citizens of Cleveland and, more broadly, the Western Reserve, toward the Black Laws was one of acceptance. Even as they opposed the extension of slavery into their state, white Clevelanders nonetheless collaborated with the institution of human bondage where it existed, printing advertisements for runaway slaves in local papers and returning captured fugitives to their owners as a matter of course. Consequently, political struggle was a

fundamental component of the black experience in Cleveland from the very first.²

Despite the dissuasive influence the Black Laws and state constitution exerted on black settlement, the pace of black population growth quickened in the last two decades of the antebellum era. The 121 people comprising Cleveland's black community in 1840 nearly doubled to 224 ten years later, and the 1850s showed the first dramatic rise in the city's black population, which grew by 72 percent to 799 by 1860. The increase was influenced by the intensifying national battle over slavery and the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, a law that compelled the residents of free states to assist in the capture of runaway slaves, threatened to ensnare free blacks as well as escaped bondsmen, and, for those reasons, provoked, "considerable indignation ... in the Western Reserve," which had by then developed into a stronghold of anti-slavery sentiment. While black residents in Cleveland had provided safe harbor, transport, clothing, food, money, and other assistance to fugitive slaves for decades, the growth of abolitionism in the Western Reserve in the early 1830s produced an interracial movement that fought not only to end slavery, but to promote racial equality and overturn the Black Laws that circumscribed the citizenship of black Clevelanders.³

From the founding of the Cleveland Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, the spirit of abolitionism spread rapidly, and the group was reorganized five years later as the Cuyahoga Anti-Slavery Society. In the subsequent decade, Cleveland was the site of numerous public denunciations of slavery offered by local abolitionists as well as those

² Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 5-6; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 63-64.

³ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 25; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 17, 270.

with national reputations, including Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison. The shift in public sentiment was especially evident in the issue of runaway slaves. Courts routinely frustrated the efforts of bounty hunters and slave owners to capture fugitives, in a number of cases charging them with kidnapping. Vigilance committees announced the presence of bounty hunters when they were detected. The local press generally expressed approval at both of these tendencies. In this changed climate, Cleveland, with its location on Lake Erie, developed into a key station on the Underground Railroad. Serving as the terminus of seven routes through Ohio, the city became the final way station on the long journey to freedom in Canada for tens-of-thousands of runaway slaves.⁴

In addition to working determinedly in the struggle to abolish slavery, black Clevelanders were at the forefront of a range of efforts to imbue their status as free people with the substance of political and social equality and unimpeded economic opportunity. Barred from voting until the ratification of the 15th amendment (which passed the Ohio legislature by one vote), members of Cleveland's black community found alternative modes of political expression, taking part in the national Negro Convention movement by organizing and participating in state conventions as early as the 1830s and continuing them into the 1850s. While they could take no binding action, delegates to these state conventions argued for the repeal of the Black Laws, and debated other pertinent political questions including, "the feasibility of violent or nonviolent overthrow of slavery, voting rights, educational access, and colonization versus

⁴ Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 12-29.

emigration.”⁵

As the abolitionist movement grew in Cleveland, the city’s black residents had both an organization and a set of white allies through which they could exert direct political force in the interest of equal rights. Members of the Cuyahoga County Anti-Slavery Society, “began pressuring office seekers to take a strong stand against the Black Laws,” as early as 1838, and, “the repeal of the codes became a leading issue on the Reserve,” throughout the next decade. The 1840s also saw the emergence of abolitionists running for office, with candidates for Governor in the 1842, 1844, and 1846 elections. Although they failed to win any of those contests, the number of votes these candidates captured tripled over the four years. Abolitionists had better luck gaining access to the state legislature, where a group elected from the Western Reserve as Free-Soilers “held the balance of power,” and wielded their influence to overturn the most odious provisions of the Black Laws and integrate public education in 1848.⁶

Even as they fought tirelessly to attain equal political rights and to resist the segregation of public accommodations wherever they encountered it, as the size of Cleveland’s black community grew, its members also established their own fraternal, literary, and educational organizations, debating clubs, a temperance society, and a weekly newspaper as a means pursuing of self improvement and promoting community solidarity. The first black church in Cleveland, St. John’s AME, was founded in 1830. By the time the Civil War approached its denouement in 1864, two additional black churches,

⁵ Nishani Frazier, “Harambee Nation: Cleveland CORE, Community Organization, and the Rise of Black Power” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2008), 25.

⁶ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 7, 16; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 12-13, 64-65.

Shiloh Baptist and Mt. Zion Congregational, had been established.⁷

There has been some scholarly debate about the formation of independent black institutions in Cleveland during the nineteenth century, with Kenneth Kusmer arguing that, “equal access to most public accommodations,” between 1830 and 1870, together with what he calls the “integrationist ideology” of the city’s black leaders, “retarded the development of separate black institutions.” Accordingly, Kusmer interprets the founding of St. John’s AME as something of an aberration which he seeks to resolve by explaining that first black church in the city was established by, “a lower-class element,” of the black community who, “felt out of place attending the staid services of the integrated congregations.”⁸ Taking some exception to this interpretation, Nishani Frazier places more significance on the independent organizations that Cleveland’s black community formed, seeing them as evidence of a prevailing attitude of self-help and group consciousness that emerged in the antebellum period as the black community added members and existed alongside the “integrationist ideology” Kusmer identifies. Moreover, Frazier adds useful detail to the founding of St. John’s AME, noting that the church grew out of the religious meetings of six former slaves (Kusmer’s “lower-class element”), and contends that the establishment of the church had more to do with the members preferring, “their own cultural style of religious expression.” In other words, rather than feeling self-conscious or “out of place” in the majority-white congregations, the founders of St. John’s AME found the integrated churches insufficient for meeting

⁷ Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 26; Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 30; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 104-107.

⁸ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 30

their spiritual needs and determined to provide for those needs themselves.⁹

These differences in scholarly interpretation reflect social divisions present in Cleveland's black community almost from the beginning. While a spirit of racial egalitarianism among "most whites" undoubtedly provided significantly better prospects for economic and social advancement for blacks living in Cleveland as compared to most other cities, and while those conditions fostered the emergence of a small black elite as well as the attainment of "an aura of middle-class respectability" among a sizable segment of the black population, the largest proportion of black Clevelanders were still clustered closer to the bottom of the economic spectrum. During the late-nineteenth century, increases in Cleveland's black population, driven primarily by the arrival of black migrants from the upper South, coincided with declines in racial equality locally, and the ascendency of white supremacy in theory and practice throughout the country. Together these developments would sharpen these latent divisions as the old-guard black elite, whose economic fortunes, political influence, and social prestige were derived from their close association with prominent and powerful white citizens, vied for leadership with a rising group of southern-born blacks whose business prospects and political power depended on the unified support of the black community which had grown to just under 6000 members by the dawn of the twentieth century.

The Cleveland these pre-World War I migrants encountered had been significantly changed from its racially egalitarian antebellum iteration by the rising tide of racial prejudice during the late nineteenth century. Increasingly, black Clevelanders encountered

⁹ Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 26.

difficulty finding housing outside of the Central Area which had maintained a growing black presence since the antebellum era. As the implementation of restrictive covenants became common in the years leading up to the first phase of the Great Migration, so, too, did, “racial discrimination in property sales.”¹⁰ White attitudes about race in general, and black people specifically, also changed, influenced by the outpouring of new theories of racial difference then at the cutting-edge of scientific thought. In part, the widespread acceptance of overtly racist ideas about black people corresponded with a transition within Cleveland’s white community, as the “native” whites of New England heritage who had fueled the growth of abolitionist sentiment and established racial egalitarianism as a social norm decreased as a percentage of the overall population. The flood of Europeans who immigrated to Cleveland to supply the labor for the city’s rapidly expanding industries arrived as an ascendant anti-black racism and federal sanction of racial discrimination via the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court marked the triumph of white supremacy, reaffirming the idea that the United States was a white man’s country. Adopting racist antipathies toward black people was, in a real sense, part of becoming an American at the turn of the twentieth century.

Not surprisingly given this new climate, black Clevelanders found that doors to a variety of public accommodations previously open to them—including restaurants, theaters, dance halls, amusement parks, and the YMCA and YWCA—were now closed, or else only admitted them on a discriminatory basis. The burdens of racial exclusion fell the hardest on the, “teachers, … artisans, clerical workers, salaried employees, and a

¹⁰ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 46.

number of small businessmen,” who comprised the middle-class of Cleveland’s black community in the early twentieth century.¹¹ This group lacked the economic position, social standing, and close association with prominent whites that shielded the old-guard black elite from the insult and injustice of discriminatory treatment. Indeed, members of the black upper-class remained largely unaffected by the increasing segregation of public accommodations, since Cleveland’s most exclusive preserves—the hotels, restaurants, and clubs catering to the upper crust of white society—maintained their established custom of admitting, “the city’s light-skinned Negro elite,” and continued “serving anyone who could afford their exorbitant prices—regardless of race.”¹² The majority of the black community who were working-class or poor were likewise less affected than the middle-class by the segregation of downtown restaurants, theaters, and the like because financial constraints generally preempted racially-restrictive policies in preventing their participation in the downtown nightlife.

The assortment of responses to the curtailment of social equality revealed additional cleavages within the black community, highlighting a range of differing political ideologies. Among the black elite, members of the old guard were proponents of integration. Their desire to stave off the decline of racial equality led most to oppose the development of all-black institutions, seeing that course as one of self segregation that only hastened the decline of the integrated life they sought to preserve. The old elite was, however, divided in their approach to preserving integrated institutions and equal rights for black Clevelanders. Many were quite conservative and opposed agitation of any kind.

¹¹ Ibid., 105.

¹² Ibid., 57.

Having attained education, affluence, and the trappings of bourgeois life, many saw the discrimination blacks faced in the early twentieth century as a result of prejudice based on culture and class rather than race. Accordingly, they counseled individual self-improvement and cultural assimilation through education, hard work, and moral righteousness as remedies.

A smaller group, far more tenacious in their pursuit of equal rights for blacks, argued that white racism rather than black incapacity was the driving force of increasing discrimination. Perhaps not surprisingly, a number of this group were lawyers who fought for black rights in court after an amendment to the state Civil Rights Act of 1884 passed in 1894 prohibited racial discrimination in public accommodations. Also included among the militants was Harry C. Smith, a state legislator who helped pass the 1894 amendment to the Civil Rights Act, a founder of the Afro-American League and member of the Niagara Movement, and the publisher of the *Cleveland Gazette* where he kept the demand for equal political rights and economic opportunity constantly before the public.¹³ While he advocated political solutions to combat the rising tide of discrimination and supported legal challenges to discriminatory practices that violated the law, Smith distinguished himself among his peers as a proponent of direct action protest who urged black Clevelanders to boycott businesses that discriminated against them.

In contrast to Smith, members of the new black elite tended, like most of the old

¹³ As with every other black official elected prior to the Great Migration, and most elected during the 1920s, Smith owed his office mainly to his affiliation with the Republican machine, rather than the black vote, which was too small to be a significant force in state and municipal elections until the late 1920s. Disillusionment with the Republican party as it grew increasingly disinterested in advancing equal rights, and increasingly tolerant of white supremacist views during the first two decades of the 20th century, led Smith and other black office seekers to counsel black political organization independent of the GOP. See, Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 241-242; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 138.

guard, to be conservative in their outlook on black social advancement, and to prefer economic development to political action as a means to secure equal treatment. However, because their origins in the South, limited formal education relative to the old elite, and dependence on a primarily black clientele for their livelihood left them at a greater remove from powerful whites, members of the new elite espoused a collectivist rather than individualist conception of self help. Consequently, new elites were more inclined to promote the development of black institutions and to urge blacks to patronize black-owned businesses as a matter of racial solidarity. While some of the businessmen and property owners in this group were undoubtedly sincere in their appeals to racial solidarity, others, especially rent profiteers who leveraged the segregated housing market and the demand for housing during the Great Migration to rent shabby lodgings to new arrivals at elevated rates, used the language of self-help and racial solidarity as cover for business practices that were clearly exploitative of poor and working-class members of the black community. While they might preach racial advancement through economic development, such men revealed themselves as self-interested operators working to improve their personal economic positions rather than strengthen the overall economic condition of the black community.¹⁴

Even as the new elite rose in influence, the small size of Cleveland's black population prior to the first wave of the Great Migration introduced practical difficulties to financing independent black institutions (with the exception of churches and fraternal societies), though several attempts were made, including the Cleveland Home for Aged

¹⁴ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 104, 244.

Colored People (CHACP) in 1896. Although the CHACP drew no opposition from the black community, even among integration-oriented members of the old elite, subsequent efforts to establish independent organizations showcased greater division. Jane Edna Hunter, who arrived in Cleveland from Hampton Institute in 1905, aimed to found the Phillis Wheatley Association in 1911 as a rooming house and job-training and -placement center for single black women who were turned away from the recently segregated YWCA and the private boarding houses available exclusively to single white women. She encountered opposition from members of the old guard including Harry C. Smith, as well as a number of elite club women who objected to Hunter as “a Southerner,” and viewed the project as an attempt “to start segregation,” in Cleveland.¹⁵ Similar efforts to establish a separate branch of the YMCA located on Cedar Avenue in the black community in 1906 split the black elite decisively, with the old guard overwhelmingly opposed and the new elite largely supportive. Funding independent black organizations would have been a daunting task even with the full support of a united black community. Given the divisions that prevailed, and the unwillingness of the old-guard elite who owned a substantial portion of the wealth in black hands to offer financial support, it is not surprising that both the Phillis Wheatley Association and plans for the Cedar Avenue YMCA faced funding difficulties that led to the acceptance of white financing (and influence) for the former, and the delay of the latter until after the Great Migration increased the black population to a size sufficient to support the branch.¹⁶

Despite the desires and protest of the integrationist-oriented elite, segregation and

¹⁵ quoted in Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 150; See also, Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 192-195.

¹⁶ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 149; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 262.

racial discrimination were an established fact in Cleveland by the time tens-of-thousands of black southerners arrived in the second half of the 1910s, swelling the population from 8,448 in 1910 to 34,451 by 1920. The arrival of so many black newcomers at a time of heightened racism and discrimination spurred the creation of Cleveland's first racial ghetto in the Central Area on the city's east side.¹⁷ The Deep South origins of the newcomers, a majority of whom hailed from Alabama with many others coming from Georgia, changed the character and culture of the black community in ways that sharpened existing social and economic divisions. As Kimberley Phillips has noted, “[a]s instances of violence and segregation rose after 1916, many longtime black residents correlated these increases with the growth of the African-American migrant population.”¹⁸ Consequently, members of the black elite and middle-class, who saw the lifestyles, habits, and folkways of the migrants as a dangerous confirmation of white stereotypes, sought to inculcate the adoption of white bourgeois cultural norms, and encouraged new arrivals to “see themselves from a northern, instead of a southern standpoint and leave their old condition and customs back in the South.” For their part, most migrants, who preferred to maintain their traditional lifestyles, found existing black institutions, especially churches, lacking. Several existing Baptist congregations split as incoming migrants grew dissatisfied with the restrained style of worship that prevailed, while the number of independent Pentecostal, Holiness, and Sanctified storefront churches exploded, accounting for 56 percent of the 132 black churches in Cleveland by

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of these dynamic, see, Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 157-189.

¹⁸ Kimberly L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 165.

1930.¹⁹

Such conditions proved conducive to the rise of a “New Negro” leadership group populated primarily by lawyers, doctors, and other professionals who, in contrast to the older professional elite, lived in and drew their clientele from the black community. Frequently identifying as Afro-Americans and evincing a degree of pride in black folk culture, members of this group did not see the development of independent organizations within the black community as antithetical to or mutually exclusive with the fight for equal rights. While they opposed the imposition of racial restrictions excluding blacks from public accommodations, municipal services, and economic opportunities, and favored integration as a legal standard, the New Negroes also recognized the importance of independent black institutions not only as markers of racial solidarity but incubators of skills necessary for the advancement of the race.²⁰

The rising influence of the New Negroes invigorated the local branch of the NAACP (originally chartered in 1914), which established a permanent headquarters in 1920, grew from some 250 members in 1915 to more than 1600 by 1922, “created a women’s auxiliary and college chapter” within the next two years, and significantly improved its finances by 1925.²¹ Able to fund itself with money contributed by its overwhelmingly black membership base, the local NAACP was unconstrained in its pursuit of equal rights and black advancement, and became the dominant political organization within the black community well into the 1930s. In contrast, the local Urban

¹⁹ Ibid., 166-180, 172.

²⁰ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 247-251.

²¹ Ibid., 260-261.

League chapter (founded in 1917 as part of the Negro Welfare Association) and the Phillis Wheatley Association both remained dependent upon financing from prominent whites whose economic interests and paternalist (or worse) perspectives about the causes of black poverty guided policy. As a result, even though they helped meet some of the real needs of newly arrived migrants, both organizations were subject to derision as little more than suppliers of compliant, nonunion labor and domestic workers to the industrial plants and homes of Cleveland's white elite. Further, insofar as they advised that the "backward" culture and habits of migrants, as opposed to structural inequality, was the primary impediment to their upward mobility, newly-arrived black southerners found both organizations increasingly irrelevant to their needs by the onset of the Great Depression, when, as Kenneth Kusmer has pointed out, "the inculcation of efficiency would prove sadly inadequate in preventing discriminatory lay-offs of black workers."²²

As the entrenchment of segregation and racial discrimination combined with economic collapse in the 1930s, southern migrants to Cleveland learned that the North was far from a promised land of political equality and economic opportunity. And as they found existing social, political, and labor organizations disapproving of their way of life, inadequate to their needs, or willing to admit them only on a discriminatory basis if at all, they exemplified a determination to combat the injustice they faced directly, through the formation of militant grassroots organizations that drew membership from the poor and working-class black masses.

The rapid growth of the Cleveland branch of Marcus Garvey's UNIA as the first

²² Ibid., 254-259. This quote appears on page 257.

such organization in the city revealed the extent to which existing social welfare and protest organizations failed to meet the needs of the poor and working-class men and women who comprised the bulk of the six thousand members in 1919. By 1923, the UNIA claimed a Cleveland membership in excess of fifteen thousand people. Explicitly black nationalist in orientation, the UNIA inculcated race pride and community solidarity among its members, while a pan-African consciousness connected the black struggle in the United States to those of black people the world over. Despite the enthusiasm for the UNIA's program, scholars have argued that the influence of the Cleveland branch was rather limited by ineffective local leadership, as well as the, "siphoning of black working class members by the NAACP and the militant, group conscious rhetoric of most of the New Negro leadership," both of which, "removed the uniqueness of the UNIA as a representative of black nationalist ... sentiment."²³

Ultimately a greater force in shaping the tradition of militant black protest in Cleveland was the Future Outlook League (FOL), formed in February, 1935 to combat the economic marginalization of black workers for whom the deepening of the Great Depression in Cleveland had dire consequences. As black unemployment spiked, poverty blanketed the black community, fully 80 percent of which was compelled to rely on direct or indirect relief by 1934. Aligned with similar "Don't Shop Where You Can't Work" protest efforts in other cities, the initial mission of the FOL was to secure jobs for its members in white-owned stores that, while located in the black community and thus

²³ Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 186-187; Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 47; Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 228-234..

dependent on black patrons to stay in business, refused to hire black workers.²⁴ The group was led by John O. Holly, an Alabama native who worked in coal mines in Virginia as well as a Detroit auto plant for the Packard Motor Company before moving to Cleveland. The membership was primarily composed of southern migrants, many unemployed, and several early members were also members of the Communist Party. This early lineage proved decisive in shaping the FOL's confrontational approach and solidifying its commitment to boycotts and pickets as protest methods.²⁵

The FOL's aggressive style earned the disapprobation of the black middle-class who derided Holly as an outsider and opposed the direct action of the FOL in favor of negotiations with white power brokers. The League's early and continued successes, however, validated the choice to use boycotts and pickets, and won the organization a key ally in *Call and Post* publisher William O. Walker, effectively weakening whatever influence the criticism from other middle-class leaders may have had. These successes, and the combative style that achieved them, also attracted new members to the League which claimed a membership of 18,000 in 1939, rivaling the NAACP in size and importance.²⁶

Despite its initial successes opening up job opportunities for its members, the FOL soon learned that a number of duplicitous store owners failed to abide by the agreements reached with the League, firing workers soon after hiring them, reducing their

²⁴ There were fewer than 100 black workers employed in the 3,000 or so such stores operating in the Central Area in the early 1930s. See, Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 190-197; Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 284- 285.

²⁵ Ibid., 203-205.

²⁶ Ibid., 205-206, 213.

wages, and shortening or lengthening their hours at will. Consequently, the FOL found itself increasingly involved in monitoring the wages, hours, and conditions of black workers, eventually forming an affiliated organization called the Employees' Union that guarded the rights and interests of black workers who were denied such protections from existing labor unions.²⁷ With the mobilization for World War II and the revival of industrial production, the FOL shifted its focus from retail operations to Cleveland's factories, determined to increase the number of black workers in the industrial labor force, and challenge the racial restrictions that kept black workers clustered in unskilled job categories performing the heaviest, dirtiest, and most dangerous work. In doing so, the FOL took on organized labor, employers, and the state government as it fought for the implementation and enforcement of the fair employment practices called for in President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802. Although the power of these constituencies proved considerably greater than the Central Area retail merchants, in the estimation of one historian the continued action of the FOL throughout the war, "nonetheless underscored the continuing necessity of community-based protest."²⁸ Moreover, driven by conscious race pride and an ethic of self determination, the FOL's insistence on direct action as a method of struggle, along with its embrace of self defense in the face of violence, prefigured the emergence of militant black nationalist organizations during the 1960s.

²⁷ Ibid., 219-223.

²⁸ Black workers accounted for just 3.8 percent of the industrial labor force in Cleveland in 1940, holding fewer than 5,000 of the 130,000 industrial jobs. That same year, the 84,504 black people living in Cleveland represented 9.6 percent of the city's total population. See, Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 226-252, 229.

GRASSROOTS POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN THE 1960S

While the fundamental cause of freedom remained essentially unchanged from the preceding decades, the specific impediments to racial justice in the 1960s reflected the postwar historical developments of black migration and ghetto expansion described in the previous chapter. Unlike the South, racial injustice blacks faced in the North was neither rooted in law nor maintained through disfranchisement—though it was, as in the South, ultimately reinforced through violence. The problems of housing, jobs, poverty, schools, and police abuses confronting the masses of black people in the urban North were instead based on an exploitative economic system underpinned by public policy. The key injustice of the ghettos in which the majority of black city-dwellers were trapped was not the spatial isolation they imposed, as such, but the discrimination that caused, and the exploitation that resulted from that isolation. It was not free market forces that produced and maintained postwar ghettos but the inverse. Black people did not freely choose to pay more to live in dilapidated housing in high-poverty neighborhoods with overcrowded schools that were far removed from remunerative employment and patrolled by violent police officers. They were forced into those circumstances by a lack of alternatives as black renters found that apartments outside the ghetto were reserved for whites only, while discriminatory lending policies drawn from Federal Housing Administration guidelines prevented blacks from buying property in neighborhoods where black people were not already the majority, and most often even in neighborhoods where they were.

Restricted access to the housing market not only contributed to residential segregation, but also drove exploitation in the ghetto both by preventing the accumulation

of wealth in the black community (even as federal mortgage guarantees subsidized wealth accumulation in white-only suburban developments), and by promoting wealth extraction through the creation of a captive market. With nowhere else to live, existing black neighborhoods became severely overcrowded. The second wave of southern migration to Cleveland between 1940 and 1960 contributed significantly to the three-fold increase in the black population from 84,504 to 250,889 during those years, which meant that the ghetto remained severely overcrowded even as the departure of upwardly-mobile whites opened space for the black ghetto to expand beyond the confines of the Central Area. Consequently, the captive market in the black ghetto was also an over-saturated market, the combined effect of which was an artificially limited supply of rental housing (itself exacerbated by the formidable barriers to mortgage acquisition and homeownership, as well as urban renewal land clearance programs that reduced housing in black neighborhoods), and an artificially inflated demand for that same housing which allowed the escalation of rents in black neighborhoods to levels far above market rates elsewhere in the city. Because the majority of the rental housing in the ghetto was owned by white absentee landlords, the ultimate result was an accelerated drain of wealth from the black community. Further, the inflated demand allowed landlords to extract elevated rents without investing in maintenance. As buildings deteriorated, the spread of blight throughout the ghetto further depressed property values, creating downward pressure on wealth accumulation for the small number of black property owners. Much more than personal prejudice, the racial injustice that created and sustained the black ghetto was a structural feature of the economy that functioned to extract wealth from an oppressed

black community and transfer it to an exploitative white community in a process of underdevelopment.

Although derived from structural causes, this exploitation was experienced by the majority of black Clevelanders as a series of interwoven quality-of-life issues. Residential segregation also meant segregated schools, as Cleveland organized education according to a decentralized “neighborhood schools” plan. Because black neighborhoods were overcrowded, the classroom space available in black neighborhood schools was quickly outstripped by the number of pupils. Moreover, by the 1940s, the city itself was in a state of decline made worse by the resumption of decentralization that relocated investment capital and blue-collar jobs from the city to its suburbs, eroding the tax base upon which city services depended, and adding another barrier to employment and economic advancement for black workers. As frustration over these conditions mounted, members of the black community who sought redress at City Hall found municipal officials indifferent, if not openly hostile, to their concerns, while appeals to black political leaders, who were constrained by their fealty to local party machines, met with some understanding but yielded few results.

Quite reasonably, a number of black political activists interpreted these conditions as evidence of a colonial, or at least semi-colonial, relationship between black people and the American state, an outlook which served to link black political struggle in Cleveland to the anti-colonial efforts giving rise to newly-independent nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In the light of this analysis, integration appeared an obviously insufficient remedy to the causes of racial injustice. A program of separation and independent black

community development, although presenting a certain psychological attraction, nonetheless offered few possibilities for political engagement, while the relative size and strength of the hostile white population threatened the tenability of such a project. Instead, black liberation would require a transformation of the structural processes undergirding black oppression in the United States, or, in other words, a revolution. Insofar as a capitalist political economy predicated on white supremacy was understood as the common source of oppression suffered by black people in the US and the colonized populations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, those anti-colonial efforts not only presented new models of political struggle, but also supported a process of identity reformation among blacks in the US that was rooted in pride for their African ancestry. As such, the black nationalist orientation that developed among grassroots organizations endeavoring to build a mass-based black liberation movement in Cleveland was predicated both on pragmatic concerns regarding the improvement of conditions on the ground as well as political ideology. In addition to local problems and international perspectives, the personal connections that tied Cleveland activists to the South ensured that the emergence of a mass-based, direct action movement challenging Jim Crow among black people in the southern United States would influence the grassroots movement in Cleveland almost as much as specific conditions on the ground in the Forrest City.

Such influences also ran the other way, as the insights and lessons derived from the struggle in Cleveland radiated outward. Nishani Frazier has made a compelling case, for example, that the Cleveland branch of CORE was instrumental in pushing the national

organization toward an increasingly militant orientation that pursued the acquisition of black power in order to remove the mechanisms of control over black communities from existing white power structures and relocate them among the members of those communities. This process was facilitated by the movement of key activists from Cleveland CORE, including Ruth Turner, Arthur Evans, Antoine Perot, and Donald Bean, into leadership positions in national CORE.²⁹ This dynamic is also evident in the example of the Afro-American Institute (AAI), a revolutionary black nationalist organization founded by Cleveland school teacher and community activist Don Freeman in 1962. The organizing work that led Freeman to establish the AAI not only advanced a more militant course of black struggle in Cleveland (as Frazier notes, Cleveland CORE gained its militancy from alliances and overlapping membership with the AAI and other grassroots groups), but also laid the groundwork for the development of the Revolutionary Action Movement. Freeman's organizing knitted together a regional coalition of like-minded activists in Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York who sought to realign the black freedom struggle in the United States by moving it away from the goal of integration into the American system and pointing it instead toward the objective of black liberation *from* America as part of a worldwide revolution among people of color against global capitalism and U.S. imperialism. Activists in Cleveland were also early proponents of armed self defense in response to violent white resistance to civil rights initiatives, most notably school integration. Undoubtedly influenced by the example of Robert F. Williams and presence of Mae Mallory following her escape from Monroe,

²⁹ See, Frazier, "Harambee Nation," chapter 5.

North Carolina (though also following established local precedent), the announcement of the Medgar Evers Rifle Club to guard civil rights protestors in April of 1964 foreshadowed both the emergence of groups like the Deacons for Defense and the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, as well as the growing rift between adherents to nonviolence and proponents of armed self defense that threatened to split the civil rights movement by the mid-1960s.

Out of this milieu, black political struggle in Cleveland during the early 1960s developed along multiple tracks that defy easy classification, exhibiting elements associated with Civil Rights while also presaging the demand for Black Power. Adamantly opposed to segregation, fully supportive of civil rights campaigns in the South, and determined to secure an equitable share of municipal resources for their community, the men and women who initiated the grassroots struggle in Cleveland during the early 1960s did not necessarily believe in integration as the solution to their problems. The distance between themselves and the interracial, nonviolent orientation of the Civil Rights movement was widened by their advocacy of armed self defense, their identification with anti-colonial struggles in Africa, and their espousal of radical politics and associations with socialist organizations. Frequently running ahead of established leaders and determined to set the priorities of their struggle, they formed new organizations, including the Freedom Fighters of Ohio, Afro-American Institute, Medgar Evers Rifle Club, and JFK House, or reinvigorated dormant ones like the Cleveland branch of CORE, and attempted to bend existing organizations like the NAACP to their own purposes whenever possible.

The earliest expression of these tendencies took shape as the Freedom Fighters of Ohio, a group, according to Lewis G. Robinson, a founder and leader of the organization, initially made up of “about thirty-five to forty-five hardhitting [sic] men and women, most of us in our late twenties and early thirties.” The Freedom Fighters, said Robinson, were, “factory workers, not people with degrees; not the bourgeois [sic], but hungry ex-southerners like me who came North looking for equality and brotherhood and discovered that he had to fight even harder than in the South.” Although he frequently criticized the NAACP for moving too slowly and chastised the leadership for preferring discussion to action (“let’s go downtown to a dinner with whitey and let’s talk about the problems,” was how Robinson characterized their methods), the Freedom Fighters nonetheless owed their existence to boycotts led by the NAACP during March of 1960 in solidarity with the student sit-ins mushrooming throughout the South. A number of the participants in those NAACP sympathy pickets, including Robinson, maintained contact during the summer. The group “fell apart” by October, but the bonds they forged on the picket line and afterward became, “the backbone of a new, militant organization.” a few months later.³⁰

Media coverage and kin networks kept black folks in the North informed about the southern struggle, and an article in the December 8, 1960 issue of *Jet*, concerning the financial straits of three black students at North Carolina A&T who had initiated a series of lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, struck a chord with Lewis G. Robinson and Lenell

³⁰ Lewis G. Robinson, *The Making of a Man: An Autobiography* (Cleveland: Green & Sons, 1970), 57-59; Lewis Robinson, interview by John Britton, transcript of a tape recording, Cleveland, Ohio, November 15, 1967, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., 11; “NAACP Citations for Dime Store Pickets,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 7, 1960, 4A.

Harkness, who had also picketed with the NAACP. The two men met and resolved to send the students some money. Beginning with an initial commitment of five dollars, Robinson and Harkness tapped their friends, including those from the NAACP picket line, to raise funds for the freedom fighters in the South. “They were on the front lines,” explained Robinson, “so the least we could do was to send money.” The group, which called themselves the Freedom Fighters Finance Committee, raised some \$250, and sent \$130 to the students in North Carolina. Additional funds were directed to Fayette County, Tennessee to aid a group of sharecroppers who were evicted from their farms after registering to vote, and had taken up residence in a makeshift tent city they called Freedom Village. As the group in Cleveland organized support for the southern struggle, they came to the conclusion that, “something drastic better get done up North,” as well, and they determined to do it. Robinson organized a meeting at the Cedar YMCA on January 15, 1961 where the group of eighteen men and women elected a slate of officers headed by Robinson as president and adjusted its name to reflect its new focus, and the Freedom Fighters of Ohio was born.³¹

Although they were determined to avoid what they saw as the shortcomings of the NAACP, the Freedom Fighters nonetheless initially sought to work in concert with the older group. Richard Gunn, an attorney who served as a vice president of the Cleveland branch of the NAACP and Glenville community leader, was invited to the founding meeting of the Freedom Fighters as a guest speaker. Stressing that, “more young people

³¹ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 57-58; Robinson, interview, 1-2; “Shocking Case of a Sit-In: North Carolina A&T Sophomore Stumped by Financial Problems.” *Jet*, December 8, 1960; Simeon Booker, “‘We Ain’t Scared and We Ain’t Begging,’ Say Freedom Fighters.” *Jet*, December 29, 1960; “Funds for Sit-Ins,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 24, 1960; “Freedom Fighters Expand Group,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 28, 1961, 5A.

are needed to help solve the problems of equality and justice in America," and urging unity of action, Gunn's address signaled a cordial working relationship between the two groups, though Robinson's assertion that "there is a need to be met in apprising more people of the needs of the community and getting them to take an active part therein," hinted at the Freedom Fighters' frustrations with the perceived limits of the NAACP, and the intention of the new organization to catalyze struggle among a broader segment of the black community.³²

These dynamics were reflected in the first protest organized by the Freedom Fighters which targeted four banks for failing to hire black tellers, restricting access to mortgages for prospective black home buyers, and discouraging whites from purchasing homes in integrated neighborhoods. When letters written to the banks raising these concerns were ignored or deflected, the Freedom Fighters prepared to picket. Although the Freedom Fighters declared their willingness to, "work in harmony with the NAACP, the Urban League and other civil rights organizations," Robinson spelled out the key distinction between his group and the others, explaining, "our group believes in direct action. We don't believe in long, drawn-out discussions. Anyone can talk. We want freedom NOW! We don't want promises, promises, promises" [emphasis in original].³³

Robinson and other members of the Freedom Fighters understood clearly that their militant stance, combative approach, and ability to target the most pressing needs of the poor and working-class members of the black community depended on maintaining organizational independence. As they further understood, such independence could easily

³² "Freedom Fighters Expand Group," *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 28, 1961, 5A.

³³ "Youth Group Seeks Job Integration Now," *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 25, 1961, 8A.

be compromised by outside financial control. Accordingly, the group drew its funding from its members. Running the organization, “out of our own pockets,” as Robinson put it, meant the Freedom Fighters were less “susceptible to pressure.” To further protect against outside interference, the Freedom Fighters established a policy allowing only black people to serve as officers, though whites who joined the organization could become committee chairmen.³⁴

The determination and fighting spirit of the Freedom Fighters attracted the notice of organizations outside of Cleveland that were committed to protest through direct action, including CORE and SNCC. As both groups organized to extend the freedom rides throughout the South during the summer of 1961, CORE sought help from the Freedom Fighters in recruiting additional freedom riders from Cleveland. Having watched the violence waged against the initial rides in Alabama and Mississippi with horror, the Freedom Fighters—never lacking in ambition or determination, and eager to build a mass-based organization—responded enthusiastically with a plan to recruit one thousand people to support the rides. Five hundred volunteers were to be “dispatched to the South via bus, train and plane to test segregation practices in interstate travel facilities,” while an additional five hundred people would remain in Cleveland as “reserve pickets.” Perhaps hoping to invigorate the old stalwart, Robinson intended these reserves to work with the NAACP on its projects during the summer. Having secured commitments from the Baptist Ministers’ Conference to participate in an “Adopt-A-Rider” program earlier in the week, on Sunday, June 11, members of the Freedom

³⁴ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 59.

Fighters canvassed black churches on the East side, distributing 20,000 leaflets to drum up recruits and “explain the Freedom Fighters philosophy and aims.”³⁵ Although the precise figures are unavailable, it is likely that the enthusiasm of the local response did not match that of the Freedom Fighters since another plea for volunteers was made in August. Nevertheless, the group paid the expenses for the first two recruits itself, one of whom, Reverend Leon Smith, Jr., was the son of Freedom Fighters’s vice president, Leon Smith, Sr.³⁶

Moreover, the effort clearly impressed members of the National CORE office, some of whom soon thereafter hoped to recruit the Freedom Fighters as a ready-made reincarnation of the Cleveland CORE branch that had been dormant since 1953.³⁷ Such an affiliation was frustrated both by the Freedom Fighters’ insistence on maintaining independence from outside influence, and their refusal to embrace nonviolence as a tactic, let alone philosophy, of protest. On the contrary, the Freedom Fighters insisted on their right to self-defense, and developed a, “tacit agreement,” among themselves to engage in self defense in response to persistent attacks on a picket line. A “heated debate” over the question was triggered when the group, at the urging of new member James Russell, sat down to draft a Constitution in the spring of 1961. The most serious arguments concerned whether or not members should respond in kind to any and every attack on their lines, or only those that were sustained, with some members advocating

³⁵ Robinson, interview, 2-3; “1,000 Freedom Riders Sought in Cleveland,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 10, 1961, 1.

³⁶ “More ‘Riders’ Sought,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 12, 1961, 4A; “Two Freedom Riders Sent to Nashville,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 12, 1961, 17; Cleric Here Heads South to Join Freedom Rides,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 14, 1961, 11.

³⁷ Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 108.

that pickets should, “beat the hell out of,” anyone who assaulted them.³⁸ In part, these discussions were influenced by the eruption of violence against black civil rights protesters in the South. Of particular concern was the mob violence in Montgomery, Alabama initially directed against the freedom riders who had continued the voyage after the bus bombing in Anniston and further violence in Birmingham threatened to derail the effort. Because state and local law enforcement either directly aided the mob or else refused to intervene, the Kennedy administration was finally compelled to dispatch federal Marshals to Montgomery. Watching the events from Cleveland, the Freedom Fighters voted to send correspondence to both the President and Attorney General, offering them tepid praise for taking action, and assailing the apparent reluctance with which they did so. The Freedom Fighters then issued a warning that if the federal government would not act to protect black southerners from mobs of violent whites, black people would do so: “We will not stand idly by and watch our people be beaten,” the Freedom Fighters declared. “If there is no action,” they further warned:

then, during the July 4 holiday vacation period, we will urge all the thousands of Negroes returning south to visit their families, to meet in Nashville, Tenn., and to defend themselves in enjoying their God-given rights to peaceful enjoyment of life and liberty.

Such an approach to securing racial justice was clearly incompatible with the CORE doctrine and practice of nonviolence.³⁹

By the fall of 1961, the Freedom Fighters moved beyond what Lewis Robinson characterized as the “propaganda action” of their early months, and engaging forthrightly in a series of direct action campaigns. For the most part, these efforts aimed at winning

³⁸ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 61.

³⁹ “Negroes Here Hail U.S. Action,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 22, 1961, 8; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 58

employment and job upgrades for black workers, and eliminating discriminatory practices in public facilities. The first target of Freedom Fighters picket line was a downtown Kresge's department store that maintained segregated restrooms, locker rooms, and time clocks for their employees. A black woman who worked at the store brought her concerns about the discriminatory conditions to the Community Relations Board, the NAACP, and Urban League to no avail. When she approached the Freedom Fighters in September, 1961, however, she met with an entirely different response. Within twenty-four hours of receiving the complaint, the Freedom Fighters established two picket lines, one in front of the main entrance on Euclid Avenue and the other marching past the side entrance on Prospect Avenue. The apparently shocked manager of the store began negotiations almost immediately, and within forty-five minutes the Freedom Fighters had won their first victory. In addition to eliminating the segregated employee facilities, John Pringle, a labor and civil rights activist of long standing who served as the chief negotiator for the Freedom Fighters, also secured position upgrades for two black employees who moved from service jobs into sales, one of them in a management capacity. Considering that a good start, the Freedom Fighters demanded that Kresge's hire additional black employees within thirty days, and launched another picket some ten days later to ensure the store honored its commitment. The woman who made the initial complaint thereafter became one of the Freedom Fighters' "stauncest members."⁴⁰

The Freedom Fighters' quick success at Kresge's was repeated about a week later when the group negotiated additional jobs and job upgrades with Gray Drugs which

⁴⁰ Robinson, Interview, 3; "Kresge Yields to Negro Pickets," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 12, 1961, 18; "Freedom Fighters Win Pact with Gray Drugs," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 23, 1961, 3A; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 59.

operated stores throughout the city, including five on the East side.⁴¹ These victories validated the Freedom Fighters' commitment to direct action, and they soon launched a series of pickets at several more stores that did business in black neighborhoods but restricted the few black workers they hired to menial positions. Before the end of the month, the Freedom Fighters gained similar concessions from Federal Department Stores, a regional chain based in Detroit that could count only one black person among its seventy-five full-time salespeople, and two others who worked part-time. In each of these initial actions, the Freedom Fighters worked with the NAACP and the Urban League, which referred potential employees once the Freedom Fighters won commitments for additional jobs. Eager to maintain unity with established organizations, the Freedom Fighters were careful to avoid public criticism. "We believe in NAACP and the Urban League," insisted Freedom Fighter Alfonso Tyler following the protest against Federal, "but we felt some immediate action should be taken." "Cleveland," added Mildred Fletcher, the elected secretary of the Freedom Fighters, "has been dragging its feet. People here are so smug and pious about racial equality in the North. We want to remind them that discrimination is still practiced here."⁴²

The Freedom Fighters' direct action campaigns were undoubtedly effective at forcing reluctant companies to the bargaining table and winning concessions for more and better jobs for black workers once there. Even so, the total number of jobs and upgrades they secured were relatively small, with the group claiming to have placed a modest

⁴¹ "Freedom Fighters Win Pact with Gray Drugs," 3A;

⁴² "More Negro Hiring Urged by 15 Pickets," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 23, 1961, 30; "Freedom Fighters Win Federal's Picketing," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 30, 1961, 1; "Negro Leader Tells Picketing Strategy," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 30, 1961, 12.

fifteen people in new jobs in the first two months of picketing.⁴³ While these represented real gains for the individuals employed, they barely scratched the surface of black unemployment. However, at least as important as the jobs won, the early successes of the Freedom Fighters served to prove the efficacy of direct action as a protest strategy, suggesting that if the Freedom Fighters could draw on a broader base of support within the black community, their pickets and boycotts might well be scaled up to yield job gains in more significant numbers. Moreover, the direct action tactics of the Freedom Fighters attracted people to the group, which counted fifty-four active members along with sixteen others who maintained an affiliation by October, 1961.⁴⁴

As important as the number of people the Freedom Fighters drew into their orbit was who they attracted. A number of activists who would assume positions at the forefront of black political struggle in Cleveland were involved with the Freedom Fighters early on. Indeed, three new political organizations that emerged in 1962 were formed by activists with ties to the Freedom Fighters. Included among this group were Ancusto Butler, who went on to found the Job Seekers; Don Freeman, who established the Afro-American Institute and was the key organizer of a regional collection of black militants, nationalists, and socialists that formed the network of RAM revolutionaries; and John Cloud, who was instrumental in resurrecting the Cleveland branch of CORE.⁴⁵ Early manifestations of this coalition were evident in a joint meeting in February, 1962

⁴³ "Freedom Fighters Boast Of Placing 15 Negroes," *Cleveland Call and Post*, November 11, 1961, 3A.

⁴⁴ "Negro Leader Tells Picketing Strategy," 12.

⁴⁵ Ancusto Butler, interview by John Britton, transcript of a tape recording, Cleveland, Ohio, November 14, 1967, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., 14; Don Freeman, interview by the author, June 24, 2011; Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 107.

hosted by representatives from the Cleveland branch of the Negro American Labor Council (NALC), the Freedom Fighters, the Cuyahoga County Voters' League, the 11th Ward Community Club, and the fledgling Cleveland CORE, that produced a plan for political action called, "Targets for 1962," which aimed to address unemployment and job training, housing, health care, and police brutality.⁴⁶ Most of the same group collaborated again several months later to organize a Mothers' Day picket to protest the imprisonment of Diane Nash Bevel, then several months pregnant, in Mississippi with her husband James Bevel, a Cleveland native. Arguably, then, the most significant contributions of the Freedom Fighters were not the number of jobs they won so much as the example they set, and the activism they catalyzed among other young, militant black Clevelanders.⁴⁷

Among the many alliances the Freedom Fighters forged in their early years, the one that generated the biggest impact on black political struggle not only locally, but nationally as well, grew from the connection between Lewis Robinson and Don Freeman. Born in Cleveland on February 16, 1939, Freeman was Robinson's junior by ten years. He grew to adolescence in the Outhwaite Homes, one of the first public housing projects built in the nation, where the future mayor Carl Stokes also lived with his mother and brother. Both of Freeman's parents worked. His father, originally from Anderson, South Carolina, found steady employment at Warner & Swasey Company, a machine tool shop that specialized in precision optical instruments and turret lathes, while his mother moved between a number of different jobs. Through their labors, the couple were eventually able

⁴⁶ "NALC Plans Meeting On Negro Political Problem," *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 27, 1962, 3A; "Negroes Present Demands to Council," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 4, 1962, 15AA.

⁴⁷ "CORE Group to Hold Mother's Day Protest," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 12, 1962; "23 Negroes in Mother's Day Parade," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 13, 1962, 5AA.

to purchase a home in Glenville, and the family relocated. After graduating from Glenville High School in 1957, Don Freeman matriculated at Western Reserve University where he took a degree in history, graduating in 1961.⁴⁸

Freeman's formal political involvement began at college when he joined the university chapter of the NAACP. Such it was that he found himself invited to participate in what was to be the initial meeting of a new organization of college students with socialist inclinations calling itself Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Freeman made the trip to Ann Arbor Michigan on April 29, 1960 for a weekend conference on Human Rights in the North that would prove to be a, "key turning point," in his life. At the conference Freeman met a number of Left luminaries, including Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, Michael Harrington, and labor activist Norman Hill who was "instrumental" in Freeman's conversion to socialism over the course of the weekend. Persuaded by much of what he saw and heard, Freeman joined the Young People's Socialist League on May Day (appropriately enough) at the end of the weekend, and left the conference with a, "solidified commitment to revolution and radical change in the United States." Freeman clearly impressed as much as he was impressed, and was invited to participate in the inaugural SDS convention in New York City the following month, even though he was not then a member of the organization. Recruited by Al Haber, the recently elected president, Freeman joined SDS during the convention. Two months later, he represented SDS at the National Student Association (NSA) Congress in Minneapolis

⁴⁸ Freeman, interview; Carl B. Stokes, *Promises of Power: A Political Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 24-25.

where Haber introduced him to Tom Hayden.⁴⁹

A summer of politically formative experiences behind him, Freeman returned to Cleveland for his final year of college just before the emergence of the Freedom Fighters introduced a militant brand of political struggle not seen in the city since the heyday of the Future Outlook League. While he surely recognized the Freedom Fighters as potential allies, Freeman also sought “political comradeship” among other black college students during the next several years. Consequently, he returned as a representative of SDS to the 14th NSA Congress in 1961, held in Madison, Wisconsin. While there, Freeman made a connection that would prove pivotal to his future political plans to develop a radical organization when he met Max Stanford, then a student at Central State College in Wilberforce, Ohio. Stanford became involved with SDS at the NSA meeting, and helped form an “off-campus chapter” of SDS called Challenge at Central State in the fall of 1961. The two men solidified their relationship over the Christmas holiday when Freeman traveled to Philadelphia to visit Stanford at his grandmother’s house. Freeman, who was working to organize a network of young black radicals found “political affinity” with Stanford, and became a mentor for the Challenge group when Stanford returned to Central State in the spring of 1962. Having established a firm link with Stanford, Freeman planned to spend 1962 organizing.⁵⁰

After graduating from Western Reserve University, Freeman found a job teaching in the Cleveland public schools beginning in the 1961-1962 academic year. Hired in at

⁴⁹ Freeman, interview.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations, 1960-1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing, 2007), 96.

\$5000 per year on September 1, 1961, Freeman first taught English and then Social Studies at Kennard Junior High, where he would remain for nearly four years until forced out by the Cleveland Board of Education, despite an excellent teaching record, because of his political views.⁵¹ For as long as he was a teacher, though, Freeman had his summers to himself, and he used them to schedule organizing trips and further his political education. In April of 1962, Freeman traveled to New York City to visit one of his oldest friends. Growing up next door to each other in Outhwaite apartments that shared an interior wall, Don Freeman and Maceo Owens, as he knew him then, were as close as brothers. A jazz pianist, Owens moved to New York where he discovered the Nation of Islam in Harlem, drawn in by the dynamic minister of Temple Number Seven, Malcolm X. Upon encountering his childhood friend that spring, Freeman learned that he had joined the Nation. No longer Maceo Owens, Maceo X was the secretary of Temple Number Seven. He brought Freeman to a Friday night meeting and introduced him to Minister Malcolm, with whom Freeman would maintain a working relationship in the years to come, particularly following Malcolm's departure from the NOI.⁵²

The day after the school year ended in June of 1962, Freeman was on his way to Madison, Wisconsin. Tapping contacts he had made during the NSA Congress the year before, Freeman stayed with Martin Sklar, a University of Wisconsin graduate student who was associated with the New Left journal *Studies on the Left*, which had just published Harold Cruse's influential essay, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-

⁵¹ Freeman, interview; *Official Proceedings of the Board of Education Cleveland City School District, Cuyahoga County, Ohio* Vol. 82, 154.

⁵² Freeman, interview.

American.” As was true of other black radicals at the time, Cruse’s article—which argued that black people in the United States were subjects of “domestic colonialism,” pointed up the failure of western Marxists to recognize, let alone adequately address, this fact, and insisted that the “revolutionary initiative has passed to the colonial world, and in the United States … to the Negro”—had a profound impact on Freeman’s thinking.

Stimulated, Freeman left Madison for Chicago with the suggestion that he contact Donald Sykes. Again making use of his NSA contacts, Freeman hooked up with Lawrence Landry, then a graduate student in sociology who was active in the leadership of a number of political groups and campaigns in Chicago including, ACT, Friends of SNCC, and a local public school boycott. Through Landry, Freeman met Don Sykes and Thomas Higginbotham, the latter of whom was particularly receptive to Freeman’s overtures. Having planted a seed, Freeman continued his odyssey and headed for Detroit. There he met John Watson, a member of a “nationalist student collective” with revolutionary inclinations called UHURU (Swahili for “freedom”) that was based out of Wayne State University, and included General Baker, and Luke Tripp, among others in the leadership. Watson, Baker, and Tripp had previously discovered political mentors in James and Grace Lee Boggs, who introduced them to radical politics through meetings of the Socialist Workers Party. In his discussions with Watson and Baker, Freeman found the students interested in his vision of developing a hard core of professional revolutionaries who would guide the mass-based protests sweeping the South toward radical ends.⁵³

⁵³ Freeman, interview; Harold W. Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” *Studies on the Left* 2:3 (1962); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 58; James Edward Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 192-196; Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 104.

With the framework for the black revolutionary vanguard he hoped to build thus established, Freeman returned home to Cleveland before heading to Philadelphia in late July to meet again with Max Stanford. Over the course of four days the two met at Horn and Hardart to fashion the basis for what would become the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). Freeman outlined his vision for what, “in terms of a radical, black political organization, needed to be developed,” drawing particularly from Lenin’s formulation of a small, clandestine group of highly-committed professional revolutionaries who would move among the masses acting, “as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organizers,” thereby shaping their political consciousness in order to build a revolutionary struggle from mass-based protests. These discussions would prove to be the, “germination of RAM as a revolutionary black nationalist organization.” Freeman further encouraged Stanford to continue his organizing in Philadelphia as a “pilot project” for implementing their vision of RAM.⁵⁴

Freeman made plans for a pilot project of his own when he returned to Cleveland, founding the Afro-American Institute (AAI) in October of 1962 as a RAM outpost. As the first explicitly black nationalist organization established in the city in the 1960s, the AAI attracted members with a range of political perspectives. Most were militant black nationalists, though not necessarily socialists. The membership, which at its highpoint approached ninety active members, was primarily male. A small group comprising fewer than a dozen members known as the Soul Circle served as a “policy-making board.”⁵⁵ In

⁵⁴ Freeman, interview; Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 98; Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “What is to be Done?” 1901.

⁵⁵ Freeman, interview.

addition to Freeman were Henry Glover, Thaddeus Troy, Nate Bryant, Hanif Wahab, Charles Wynder, and Arthur Evans, who would subsequently apply a nationalist orientation gleaned from his involvement with AAI when he became the chairman of Cleveland CORE. Animated by a philosophy of “Awareness, Agitation, and Action,” as Freeman put it in a dispatch published in *Liberator* magazine, the AAI was determined to, “arouse greater militancy within the Black Community of Cleveland.” It did so in a number of ways, including publishing a newsletter called *Afropinion*, and distributing leaflets throughout the black community in order to present the organization’s, “outlook on the local, national, and world problems affecting Black America such as elections, urban renewal, Black economic subservience, the ‘arms race,’ and the struggle in the South.”⁵⁶

Beyond its propaganda functions, the AAI also offered a range of programs. In addition to African and African American history classes, the group organized lectures on African and African American culture, including a panel with drummer Max Roach concerning, “The Role of the Black Artist in the Struggle for Freedom,” all of which were intended to, “arouse increased concern for the African heritage and to rehabilitate the Afro-American’s self image.” The pan-African orientation of the AAI was further reflected in its affiliation with several African students from Western Reserve University, two of whom were guest speakers at an AAI forum analyzing, “The Relationship of the African Revolution to the Struggle of Black America.”⁵⁷ The group likewise involved

⁵⁶ Ibid.; Donald Freeman, “The Cleveland Story,” *Liberator* 3:6 (June 1963), 7, 18.

⁵⁷ Ibid.; “African Students Speak at Cedar Y Forum,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 23, 1963, 5A; “African Students Address Forum,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 25, 1963, 13A.

itself immediately in local and national political issues, hosting panel discussions with other groups, including the Freedom Fighters, and the Cleveland branches of the Monroe Defense Committee (MDC), NALC, and CORE, as well as local black politicians, to consider, “What’s Wrong with the American Negro?” and, “What’s Wrong with Cleveland Politics?” among other pertinent questions. Cooperation with local grassroots groups was again in evidence in the early Spring of 1963, when the AAI, MDC, and CORE led a march to the Cuyahoga County Jail at E. 21st and Payne Avenue demanding the release of Mae Mallory who was incarcerated there pending the appeal of an extradition order that would have sent her back to Monroe, North Carolina to face kidnapping charges.⁵⁸

In both its propaganda and programmatic functions, the AAI sought to advance a revolutionary nationalist analysis of racial oppression in the United States, and promote an appropriate course for black political struggle. Insisting that, “Afro-America lacks adequate leaders,” Freeman, speaking for the AAI in 1963, criticized the “so-called ‘Negro leadership’” from established civil rights organizations as the, “white man’s neutralizer of Black America’s struggle.” The good news, according to Freeman, was that a group of, “dedicated younger Black militants who are more responsive to the needs of the masses,” were poised to take over. Warning that, “the existing American political and socio-economic framework,” would prove incapable of, “eradicat[ing] white racism and exploitation,” while the program offered by, “white socialists, and Marxists,” was bereft

⁵⁸ Donald Freeman, “The Cleveland Story,” *Liberator* 3:6 (June 1963), 7, 18; “Negro Lacks Leadership, Forum Told,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 12, 1962, 5; “Councilmanic Candidates Discuss Local Politics,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 16, 1963, 6C; “100 March to City Jail in Sympathy for Mae,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 6, 1963, 3A.

of meaningful, “solutions to the ills of Black America,” Freeman presented the, “Afro-American groups throughout the nation such as the Afro-American Association in California and RAM in Philadelphia,” as the most promising solution since they, “along with the Black Muslims,” represented, “a potential vanguard in Black America’s liberation.” The crucial next step to realizing that potential, Freeman suggested, was to unite these disparate groups in a common effort, and he pronounced the Afro-American Institute eager to establish, “more effective communication and cooperation between itself and similar[ly] oriented Black organizations throughout the United States.”⁵⁹

While he therefore continued to pursue the development of a black revolutionary organization with national reach, cooperation with like minded activists was, for Freeman, also central to the struggle in Cleveland. Indeed, his early contact with local militants proved important to the foundation of the AAI. It was Lewis Robinson, for example, who helped Freeman secure a meeting space for his fledgling organization in October of 1962, serving as a liaison between Freeman and John Kellogg, the black Republican city councilor for the 18th ward who offered space in Hubbard Hall, the ward club headquarters located at E. 84th and Cedar Avenue that thereafter served as the home of the AAI. The following month, Freeman invited Robinson to participate the in the AAI’s inaugural panel discussion concerning the problems with “Negro leadership.”⁶⁰

By November 1962, Cleveland could count four militant grassroots groups including, the Freedom Fighters, who had recently elected Lewis Robinson to his third term as president; Cleveland CORE, which had continued to add members during the

⁵⁹ Donald Freeman, “The Cleveland Story,” *Liberator* 3:6 (June 1963), 18.

⁶⁰ Freeman, interview; “Negro Lacks Leadership, Forum Told,” 5.

summer and fall of that year, among the most important of whom was Ruth Turner, recently arrived from Boston where she had been a member of Boston CORE while a Harvard graduate student, who took over as the chair within three months; Ancusto Butler's Job Seekers; and the Afro-American Institute.⁶¹ Even as each group pursued projects individually, they soon joined forces to picket St. Luke's Hospital in protest of its practice of segregation after receiving complaints from patients and employees.

Launched in December of 1962, the weekly pickets lasted through March the following year by which time hospital administrators had addressed the chief concerns. Along the way, the pickets drew support from the NAACP, local clergy (some of whom were CORE members), and, eventually, Charles Carr, the long-serving black city councilor from the 17th ward, who urged the council to bring its influence to bear on the hospital.⁶²

The alliance was renewed within months of this initial success, as the AAI and Cleveland CORE joined the Freedom Fighters and Job Seekers in support of the boycott and pickets the latter had established at Central Cadillac after negotiations to get the car dealer to hire black salesmen and mechanics broke down. Ancusto Butler was the first to become frustrated as the initial discussions dragged on. By the first week in May, as he had done before, Butler launched a one-man boycott, picketing the dealership by himself. Soon realizing that negotiations would prove fruitless, the Freedom Fighters joined Butler on the line, and gave the boycott, "real muscle," developing a picket schedule to target the busiest sales hours. The AAI and Cleveland CORE were involved by the end of the

⁶¹ "Freedom Fighters Name Slate of New Officers," *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 27, 1962, 4A; Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 113, 123.

⁶² Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 123; "CORE Ends Protest At St. Luke's Hospital," *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 23, 1963, 4A.

month. Pickets were also supported by a propaganda campaign aimed at the black community. The group distributed leaflets to spread awareness, and issued a warning to prospective black customers that anyone who, “buys a General Motors car before August 1 or continues to get his car serviced by a General Motors dealer,” would effectively be run out of town. Since Central Cadillac employed several black men as car jockeys, the pickets, as Lewis Robinson recalled, relied on them to supply the, “names and license numbers of blacks who had shopped there during the working day when our line wasn’t there.”⁶³

The combination succeeded in winning, “wonderful cooperation,” from the black community, according to Robinson. Individuals who encountered the picket line went elsewhere to buy a car. More importantly, influential black businessmen added their support, including J. Walter Wills, whose family owned and operated the House of Wills, the largest funeral parlor in the city. Wills, a believer in black economic solidarity, moved the maintenance of his fleet of vehicles to another shop. His example encouraged more than a dozen other black undertakers to do likewise. Beyond economic pressure in support of the boycott, the protest received a morale boost when Art Blakey, in town with the Jazz Messengers, played an impromptu gig for the pickets who were marching one Saturday afternoon in October. Encouraged by the mounting community solidarity, the NAACP at last contributed bodies to man the picket lines.⁶⁴

From the beginning, the picket line brought together activists from across the city.

⁶³ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 63-66; Butler, interview, 8; “Civil Rights Groups Unite to Picket Central Cadillac,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 25, 6A; “Rights Group In Fourth Week of Picketing,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 8, 1963; Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 131-133.

⁶⁴ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 66-67.

As “a magnet for local militants,” as Lewis Robinson put it, the demonstrations attracted people, “who wanted ‘Freedom Now’ … We met there, planned there, tightened our muscles and became seasoned folks.” Early on, as they walked and talked, kindred spirits from the Freedom Fighters, AAI, and CORE determined to build a black united front, an umbrella organization, “to be composed of all those organizations interested in attacking the educational, housing, and employment problems of the city.” At the end of May, 1963, Ruth Turner, Arthur Evans, Don Freeman, along with Baxter Hill, who had recently formed the Defenders of Human Rights, and Lewis Robinson, Lenell Harkness, James Russell, and Leonard Hayes from the Freedom Fighters arranged a meeting with Reverend E.T. Caviness from the Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church. Caviness, who, “had been active in East St. Louis before coming to Cleveland,” was the only black minister willing to work with the group and, “take the lead in the civil rights movement,” locally. Caviness agreed to let the group work out of the Abyssinia Baptist Chuch’s offices, and the group set about to determine a name for their new organization which they eventually agreed to call the Cleveland United Freedom Movement (CUFM). Preferring to delay the announcement of CFUM’s formation until after Lewis Robinson returned from a scouting trip to the South, the other group members temporarily returned their attention to Central Cadillac and other ongoing projects.⁶⁵

The intention of the militant groups to consolidate their efforts more formally than they heretofore had done attracted the notice, and apparently concern, of the NAACP. Having rebuilt its membership from a postwar low of just over five thousand members in

⁶⁵ Ibid., 64; Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 133-134.

1950 to three-times as many by 1963, the NAACP intended to remain at the forefront of the local civil rights struggle. Wary of this potential challenger, whose member organizations had themselves seen considerable growth in their respective memberships thanks, in part, to the Central Cadillac demonstrations, Executive Secretary of the Cleveland NAACP, Harold Williams, convened a group of traditional leaders, including conservative ministers and representatives from a variety of professional and civic organizations, at the *Call and Post* headquarters to announce the formation of the United Freedom Movement (UFM). The naked power play incensed the militants, several dozen of whom attended the meeting to insist that the formation of the group be delayed until Robinson returned and the two factions might reach a detente. Instead, the UFM offered to incorporate the militants into their organization. Seeing no viable alternative, the CUFM group agreed to close ranks and work with the UFM.⁶⁶

The militants were not altogether subsumed by the new organization, however. Ruth Turner joined the Executive Committee. The Reverend Bruce Klunder, who was, along with his wife Joanne, one of the first white members of Cleveland CORE, was appointed chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee. Lewis Robinson co-chaired the Employment Committee, which counted Don Freeman, Art Evans, Ancusto Butler, and Baxter Hill as members and quickly became the most active of the five committees organized.⁶⁷ The influence of the militant group is also evident in the “Statement of Concern,” a founding document that explained the organization’s provenance and vision

⁶⁶ Robinson, interview, 50; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 64-65; Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 134-135.

⁶⁷ Commission Chairmen Memo, June 17, 1963, Container 43, Folder 3, Cleveland National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society; Employment Committee Sign-up Sheet, Container 43, Folder 3, NAACP Papers; Meeting Minutes, June 10, 1963, UFM Steering Committee, Container 43, Folder 3, NAACP Papers.

for achieving black rights. A blend of conservative and militant voices, the statement adopted a moderate tone. Noting a desire to maintain, “the traditional intent of inter-group relations in Cleveland,” and advancing the belief that, “there exists in Cleveland a reservoir of goodwill among many of the responsible citizens,” the statement also insisted that, “Negroes want total freedom and opportunity of equality now!” [emphasis in original], and warned that, “anything short of this goal will not be satisfactory” The statement further revealed the group’s intention to, “use all direct non-violent methods available to us,” and betrayed a degree of frustration with negotiations that yielded little more than “token relief” With the initial division between the factions at least superficially smoothed over, the UFM proceeded to organize a freedom march for July where it would reveal its plans to tackle issues related to jobs, housing, education, health and welfare, and political action.⁶⁸

Despite its inauspicious start, the UFM helped to make the summer and fall of 1963 one of the most active periods of black political protest the city had ever seen. Almost immediately, the Employment Committee launched attacks against both private employers, including Kraft Foods, and a fifteen million dollar public works project to expand the Public Auditorium, build a new Lakeview Exhibition Hall, and make improvements to the adjacent public park known as the Cleveland Mall, for maintaining nearly all-white workforces.⁶⁹ Because it was publicly financed, the UFM seized on the Mall construction as the, “prime employment project ... for the purpose of dramatizing

⁶⁸ “Statement of Concern,” Container 43, Folder 3, NAACP Papers; “‘Freedom March’ Memo,” June 27, 1963, Container 43, Folder 3, NAACP Papers; “50,000 to March for Freedom, Sunday,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 13, 1963, 1.

⁶⁹ Kraft Foods to Harold B. Williams, July 3, 1963 and July 5, 1963, Container 43, Folder 3, NAACP Papers.

the flagrant discriminatory practices of the building contractors, the craft unions and the various skilled trades.”⁷⁰ Starting first with negotiations, the UFM demanded that several trade unions that effectively blocked black workers from joining their ranks either reverse that practice or, if they would not, have their contract to work on the Mall project canceled by the city. If neither of these two objectives were met, the UFM representatives announced, the group would initiate a demonstration at the downtown construction site. In the ensuing back and forth between the UFM, the unions, and the city, the initial tensions between the old guard leadership of the UFM that preferred negotiations and the direct-action prone militants were again exacerbated when the leadership of the UFM continually “delayed” the demonstration, citing last-minute improvements in negotiations. Invariably, agreements were quickly betrayed by bad-faith practices or else broke down entirely when white union workers walked off the job as soon as newly hired black apprentices reported for work. Despite the ongoing impasse, the UFM Steering Committee, against the wishes of a majority of the rank and file, retreated from their earlier threat of direct action and instead maintained a “wait-and-see” posture.⁷¹ In addition to jobs, grassroots groups working independently of the UFM sought address ongoing concerns about overcrowded schools in Glenville, dilapidated housing in Hough, and police brutality throughout the city, each of which would gain urgency during the fall

⁷⁰ “Investigation Report,” June 24, 1963, Container 43, Folder 3, NAACP Papers.

⁷¹ “Electrical Union Toys With Mall Job Negotiators,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 13, 1963, 1; Allen Howard, “Union Stall Upsets Even Calm Harpole,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 20, 1963, 1; Allen Howard, “Token Union Agreement Explodes in Mayor’s Face,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 20, 1963, 4A; Al Sweeney, “Electrical Union Balks at Agreement,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 27, 1963, 1; Len Watkins, “Union Men Walkout As Negro Shows,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 10, 1963, 1; “UFM Calls off Mall ‘Action,’” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 24, 1963, 1; “Mall Stall Continues,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 21, 1963, 1.

of 1963 through the spring of 1964.

Somewhat frustrated in their attempts to consolidate their energies at home under the auspices of the UFM, the alliance of militant groups continued to seek fellowship with likeminded activists in the region. In May, as they had their initial discussions about forming the CUFM while walking the picket lines at Central Cadillac, they invited Reverend Albert Cleage from Detroit to give a lecture sponsored by the Freedom Fighters. Cleage's three-part message: that the developing freedom movement was, in fact, a struggle for survival; that discrimination in employment and other areas was caused by a system of racial oppression rather than individual bad actors; and that the failure of the NAACP to meet the needs of the masses, which led to the creation of a large number of small organizations, ultimately weakened the struggle by creating, "too many divisions," undoubtedly rang true to Ancusto Butler, Don Freeman, Lewis Robinson, Ruth Turner, and the other militants in attendance.⁷²

Ties between the Cleveland group and militant grassroots organizers in other northern cities were further strengthened at the end of the year when nineteen activists traveled to Detroit to attended the seminal Grassroots Leadership Conference in November. Cleveland activists were prominently involved, with James Russell serving as one of the executive vice-chairmen and Wilbur Gratton as a regional vice-chairman.⁷³ Moreover, the Cleveland group—hoping to generate additional leverage for the Central Cadillac demonstration which had grown increasingly contentious and hardened into stalemate over the summer, and was then dragging on into its seventh month—succeeded

⁷² "Detroit Pastor Sketches Three Needs For Equality," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 25, 1963, 4A.

⁷³ "Local Rights Leaders Attend Detroit Seminar," *Cleveland Call and Post*, November 23, 1963, 4A.

in winning passage of a resolution calling for a nationwide boycott of General Motors.⁷⁴

The highest profile contribution from the Cleveland group came at the closing session of the conference, a rally held on Sunday night at the King Solomon Baptist Church where Don Freeman, scheduled to speak along with Reverend Cleage and William Worthy, took his turn at the podium immediately before the keynote address, which Malcolm X delivered as his “Message to the Grassroots.”⁷⁵ Buoyed by the meeting, Cleveland’s militants returned home to confront the issues that would come to dominate the local struggle over the course of the next several months: school desegregation and police brutality.

Police brutality had been a problem for Cleveland’s black community for decades prior to the 1960s, with accounts of the more sensational episodes frequently drawing concerned and detailed coverage in the *Call and Post*. Even so, as the issue reemerged in the context of the unfolding black freedom struggle, it assumed a greater proportion of urgency. This was particularly true among militants inclined toward revolution who were preparing themselves to literally fight for the liberation of black people. Police brutality for Don Freeman and the AAI was less a problem of individual misdeeds by particular officers than a manifest expression of naked state power that operated without restraint to compel compliance with and submission to the prevailing system of racial oppression

⁷⁴ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 68. Nishani Frazier, discusses this situation, but writes that, “there was no movement by the committee,” to pass the motion for a nationwide boycott of GM. See, Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 135. The apparent contradiction would seem to be explained by Grace Lee Boggs who notes in her autobiography that the motion for a GM boycott was passed at a subsequent plenary session along with a number of other motions that had been proposed earlier. See, Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 128.

⁷⁵ Freeman, interview; Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour*, 88-89; George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 3.

among black Clevelanders. Accordingly, it most often targeted the segment of the black community that, in the eyes of the nearly all-white Cleveland police force, demonstrated the greatest potential for rebellion: teenaged boys and young men.

It was precisely such an occurrence during the summer of 1963 that captured the attention of the AAI, which thereafter worked unceasingly to keep the issue at the forefront of the local political struggle.⁷⁶ On Sunday, July 21, 1963, seventeen-year-old Glenville High School junior, James Long, Jr., brought his two little sisters to a playground near their Chesterfield Avenue home to enjoy the afternoon. Long joined in a baseball game while his sisters played with other kids from the neighborhood. A “spat” between Long’s sisters and another girl, the daughter of Mrs. Nell Gaines, that reportedly amounted to little more than a verbal altercation after a “misunderstanding,” led Gaines to call the police. When patrolmen Thomas E. Horgan and Dennis N. Kehn arrived at the playground, Gaines, with the help of her daughter and other children, pointed out the Long girls and identified James as their brother. James Long, who was waiting for his turn at bat, walked over to the area where his sisters were being confronted by the officers. Kehn began questioning Long, who had undergone three ear operations in his youth and was hard of hearing, asking for his name and address. Likely not hearing the question, Long, “just grinned,” according to Mrs. Gaines. The smile apparently enraged Horgan and Kehn who grabbed Long and began slapping and punching him in the face and jabbing him in the midsection with their billy clubs before placing him under arrest.

⁷⁶ Freeman, interview.

He was charged with assaulting an officer.⁷⁷

Mrs. Rose Brantley, who lived on Chesterfield Avenue and witnessed the beating from a vantage point only a few feet away, insisted that Long did nothing to provoke the officers. "That boy didn't raise a hand to hit the policemen," Brantley maintained, adding that, "it was a pity and a shame the way those policemen beat that boy ... I wish that I could have helped [him]." Nevertheless, the police dragged Long to the patrol car and put him in the back seat, whereupon Kehn cut his chin while slamming the car door, an injury he would later try to blame on Long. Likely terrified, perhaps confused, and certain that he had done nothing wrong, James Long jumped out of the police car. He was quickly caught by Kehn in front of the patrol car. While Kehn held him, Long later testified, Horgan came up behind him and poked him in the ribs with his service revolver until Long doubled over. Horgan, who was still behind Long, then smashed the butt of his pistol in to the back of the youth's head, striking him just behind the left ear. The wound required five stitches, and doctors feared Long would lose his remaining hearing permanently.⁷⁸

The incident provoked an immediate response from Don Freeman who led members of the AAI to Mayor Ralph Locher's office and demanded a meeting. When they encountered initial resistance, told that Locher was too busy to meet, the group staged a two-hour sit-in until the mayor relented. They demanded the immediate dismissal of both Kehn and Horgan, and that the charges against Long be dropped.

⁷⁷ Len Watkins, "'It Was a Pity the Way Cops Beat That Boy,'" *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 27, 1963, 1; "About the Brutal Beating," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 17, 1963, 3C; "Judge Clears Beaten Youth; Citizens Ask Cops Dismissal," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 14, 1963, 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Receiving little satisfaction beyond the initiation of an internal police department investigation of the incident, AAI members coordinated with residents in the neighborhood around Chesterfield Avenue to amass several thousand signatures on a petition repeating the demands the group made to Locher and calling for additional changes to police recruitment and training. Freeman also brought the matter to the UFM which reported the beating to the Civil Rights Commission in Washington, D.C., triggering an FBI investigation. Despite the pressure, there is no evidence that Kehn and Horgan ever faced penalties for their conduct. James Long was cleared of the charges leveled against him after a parade of fourteen witnesses corroborated his version of events in juvenile court. Apparently not content to let the matter rest there, a month later the police brought new charges against Long, accusing him obstructing the police and disorderly conduct. Long was again acquitted.⁷⁹

Although the unprovoked beating James Long suffered at the hands of two Cleveland Police Department officers sparked the ire of a broad swath of Cleveland's black community and a number of sympathetic whites active in civil rights, the largest, most tenacious display of united action in the cause of racial justice came in support of the effort to desegregate Cleveland's public schools and equalize the quality of education throughout the district. As with police brutality, problems with segregated and overcrowded schools were a longstanding complaint of black Clevelanders that dated to efforts of the NAACP in the 1930s to improve the quality of the curriculum taught in schools with predominantly black student bodies. The initial iteration of Cleveland

⁷⁹ Ibid.; "FBI Probes Cop Attack on Youth," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 3, 1963, 1; Allen Howard, "Rights Group Seeks Action From Mayor," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 7, 1963, 9A; Bob Williams, "Cleared Victim of Cop Abuse Charged Again," *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 19, 1963, 1.

CORE likewise took up the fight a decade later. As the Second Great Migration swelled the black population on the east side of the city where the construction of new schools failed to keep pace with the increase in the student population, overcrowding became a severe problem in the 1950s.⁸⁰ Still apparently unconcerned with the need to provide quality education to black students, the Cleveland Board of Education instituted a system of “relay classes,” effectively running two half-day sessions, to relieve the congestion in the elementary schools in black neighborhoods. The Board also made use of several dozen “nonstandard” rooms. Some of these were located in basements and attics the Board admitted were not suitable for use as classrooms, while others were rooms originally designed for specialty classes in crafts, music, and science that could no longer be used for those purposes, further diminishing curricular offerings. Even with these procedures, a number of the schools still maintained kindergarten waiting lists into the 1960s for lack of room.⁸¹

Pressure from grassroots parents’ groups in Hough and Glenville where the overcrowding was most severe by the early 1960s, finally convinced the Board of Education to institute a bussing program that transported black students from overcrowded schools to nearby schools in white ethnic neighborhoods on the East side

⁸⁰ Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 150-152.

⁸¹ “School Housing in 1960” and “School Housing in 1961,” Annual Reports, Container 30, Folder 1, NAACP Papers;

that had empty classrooms beginning in February of 1962.⁸² A number of white parents with children in these “receiving schools” protested what they interpreted as the forced integration of their neighborhood schools, leading to assurances from the Board of Education that the classes transported from black schools would be kept intact, restricted to the unused classrooms in the receiving schools, and prevented from using the cafeteria, gymnasium, and participating in all-school events. This arrangement angered black parents who had sought the integration of their children into the receiving schools, convinced it was the only way to ensure black students received an equally high-quality education. The situation came to a head toward the end of 1963 when the Board of Education first reached an agreement to integrate the transported students with the Hazeldell Parents’ Association (HPA), a group of concerned parents of children who were bussed from the overcrowded Hazeldell Elementary School in Glenville that had secured the support of Cleveland CORE, and through them the UFM.⁸³

When the HPA and CORE discovered that the Board of Education had reneged on its promises to fully integrate the bussed students into their receiving schools by January, 1964, they planned a series of pickets at the Board of Education offices downtown and three of the receiving schools in white neighborhoods. While the initial picket at the

⁸² Charles Sanders, “Hough Mothers Demand School Probe,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 30, 1961, 1; Charles Sanders, “Hough Parents Pressure End of Relay Classes,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 14, 1961, 1; Len Watkins, “Move to Transport Pupils from Relay Classes Jan. 29,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 20, 1962, 1. These efforts recalled similar protests waged by grassroots organizations of black mothers in the 1950s. See, for example, “Mothers Storm School Board, Get Pledge of More Rooms,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, November 19, 1955, 1; “PTA Head Calls Protest ‘Radical,’” *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 29, 1956.

⁸³ Detailed coverage and analysis of the movement to desegregate Cleveland’s public schools is provided in Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” chapter four, and Leonard Nathaniel Moore, “The School Desegregation Crisis of Cleveland, Ohio, 1963-1964: The Catalyst for Black Political Power in a Northern City,” *Journal of Urban History* 28:2 (January 2002) 135-157.

Board of Education on January 28, 1963 proceeded without incident, violence greeted the pickets who marched the flowing day outside two elementary schools in Collinwood, where white teenagers and adults jeered, spat upon, shoved, and sicced dogs on the marchers. The mounting tension threatened to produce a *bona fide* emergency on January 30th when HPA, CORE, and members from other groups in the UFM orbit planned to picket the third receiving school in the Italian-American enclave of Murray Hill. Having watched the violence enacted against demonstrators at the Collinwood schools the day before, which yielded no reprisals, Murray Hill residents made plans to battle any protestors who invaded their neighborhood.⁸⁴ Someone, who would identify himself only as “A Union Man,” sent the mayor a racist and otherwise intemperate letter on January 29th that revealed the mindset of a considerable portion of Cleveland’s white community, and clarified the potential for explosive violence. “How long,” the union man asked Locher:

do you intend to avoid the White People ofthis Congo City by your Gutless Action when the Nigger makes a demand with threats. I am a White Union man I have two daughters of school age...Don’t forget Mr. Locher the White people elected you as being a courages man but I Am sore I have to tell you you are not acting like one, and I can tell you why you will lose more conventions Mr. Mayor, too many UN-CIVILIZED NEGROS...Get wise to yourself Mr. Mayor you are the Boss in this town, act like one, before you have a nice fat Race Riot on your hands by White Citizens who are not Gutless. [sic]

Sensing trouble, UFM supporters flooded Locher’s office with telegrams warning that the, “fathers of Murray Hill [would be] staying home from work,” and asking him to

⁸⁴ Ann Skinner, “Board Today Faces Negro Picket Line,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 28, 1964, 1; Ann Skinner, “Board Won’t Yield,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 30, 1964, 1; “Locher Says He’ll Sit Out School Row,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 30, 1964, 1; George J. Barmann, “Insults, Fists, Threats Traded by Angry Crowd,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 30, 1964, 9.

provide police protection for the planned picket.⁸⁵

Overnight backchannel negotiations between Board of Education president Ralph McAllister and representatives from UFM that were arranged through the auspices of James Norton, who headed the Greater Cleveland Association Foundation, and Ralph Findley, who several years before was elected as the first black president of the Board of Education, succeeded in getting the UFM to call off the planned march in exchange for a promise to completely integrate bussed student when school opened for the 1964-1965 academic year in September. Because the accord was not finalized until the morning of the 30th, word did not reach all of those who planned to march before they left home for the designated meet-up spot in a parking lot at the bottom of Murray Hill.⁸⁶ When they got the news about the settlement, the group of parents and activists debated what to do, with a number, Ruth Turner among them, urging that the march proceed as planned, come what may. Persistent pleas from white clergy affiliated with the UFM and others fearing the potential extent of violence finally prevailed, however, and the assembled pickets agreed to call off the march, preventing what would undoubtedly have been a bloody clash. As it was, several black people, including one parent who thought the picket group was assembling at the Murray Hill School, and a reporter and photographer who were unaware the march was called off, were attacked by the seething mob that had assembled at the top of the Hill. Police on the scene failed to restrain the crowd as it grew increasingly riotous, and were themselves assaulted by members of the mob. No arrests

⁸⁵ Union Man to Ralph Locher; assorted telegrams to Ralph Locher, Container 19, Folder 1, Ralph S. Locher Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society. The spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors in letter from the Union Man have been transcribed exactly as they appear in the original.

⁸⁶ Diana Tittle, *Rebuilding Cleveland: The Cleveland Foundation and Its Evolving Urban Strategy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 118-120.

were made.⁸⁷

Later that day, when the HPA and CORE contingents of the UFM learned the details of the negotiation, they became furious and resolved to wage a boycott against the schools. As plans for that effort got underway, the group staged a sit-in at the Board of Education offices the following day. The protesters stayed in the building through the weekend, while others picketed on the street outside. When the Board of Education offices opened the next week, the UFM packed the building again. The action signaled the declining commitment to nonviolent principles, as the militant UFM faction engaged in a number of disruptive practices, including barricading doors and blocking corridors. Demonstrators were further angered by what they already viewed as a recalcitrant city administration when the Cleveland police officers sent to clear the protestors from the Board of Education building manhandled a number of women and dragged several others down three flights of stairs. Two of the sit-in participants who were removed by the police sustained injuries requiring hospitalization.⁸⁸

While the demonstrators paid with their bodies, they succeeded in forcing the Board of Education to abide by their previous agreement to integrate the receiving schools immediately. As protestors would quickly realize, however, it was a hollow

⁸⁷ Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 162-164; Don Robertson, "Board Faces Picketing, Sit-Ins," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 31, 1964, 1; "In Little Italy, Violence Shatters Long Peace," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 31, 1964, 24; "Hate-Filled White Mob Attacks C-P Newsmen," *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 8, 1964, 1.

⁸⁸ Ann Skinner, "Proposals Called Far Too Little," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 31, 1964, 1; Don Robertson, "Board Faces Picketing, Sit-Ins"; Don Robertson and William C. Barnard, "41 Stage All-Night Sit-In at School Board Building," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 1, 1964, 1; Fred Mollenkopf, "17 Continue Sit-In; Others Map Boycott," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 2, 1964, 1; Don Robertson and William C. Barnard, "UFM Readies School Boycotts," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 3, 1964, 1; Bob Williams and Ken Temple, "Cops Batter Negro Pickets," *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 8, 1964, 1; Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 164-168.

victory. Eager to sidestep the issue of integration once and for all, the Board of Education raced to build new schools in Glenville which would prevent the need to bus black students to schools in white neighborhoods and result in the resegregation of elementary schools on the East side. The UFM attacked this plan as unjust and inefficient, repeatedly making the point that the district already had more than enough space available in its elementary schools to accommodate all of Cleveland's children, provided the city integrated its school system. The coalition group also produced a position paper titled "Guidelines for Democratic Education" that called for major changes throughout the district in order to improve education for all students. The centerpiece of the UFM proposal was a plan to centralize Cleveland's public schools and educational programs, breaking down the existing neighborhood-schools model, and paving the way to a modern, integrated system that provided equal access to high quality education. The Board was unmoved, and proceeded with plans to begin school construction as soon as possible in the spring.⁸⁹

In the brief lull before the start of school construction in April, Lewis Robinson and number of the Freedom Fighters and militant allies paused to digest the implications of the recent battles over the schools. While they were undoubtedly angered by the Board of Education's recent betrayal, they were hardly surprised. After all, such intransigence was precisely the reason they had long preferred action to negotiation. Instead, the key issue remained the aborted march on Murray Hill. Understanding clearly that officers from the Cleveland Police Department (CPD) who had earned their reputation for

⁸⁹ "Guidelines for Democratic Action," Position Paper, Container 28, Folder 5, NAACP Papers; Don Robertson, "Mixed Classes Now, Is Board's Promise," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 5, 1964, 1; Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 168-170.

brutality against blacks, including, recently, women and children, and who, when attacked by the Murray Hill mob, failed to adequately defend themselves, obviously could not be counted on to protect the black community, particularly when its pursuit of racial justice brought it into conflict with whites. At a party in late February to celebrate the recent wedding of Lewis Robinson to Beth Wolland, a young white woman with ties to the Socialist Workers Party who had been active in Cleveland CORE nearly since its founding, a discussion concerning the “retreat from Murray Hill,” and the prospects for developing a, “black man’s peace patrol,” broke out among a group of men, many of whom had been active in the movement. More than a few were, like Robinson, armed services veterans. All were agreed on the principle of arming for self defense.⁹⁰

Over the next few weeks, Robinson continued to consider the logistics of how such a group might operate, and surveyed other men in his neighborhood to gauge their level of support were he to proceed in organizing one. He raised the possibility at his barbershop, explaining the events at Murray Hill and the initial discussions at the party. The nearly twenty men present talked at length and the conversation stretched on for an hour or more. At the end, Robinson counted only three who were opposed to the idea for a peace patrol. Confident that his community would back him, Robinson next reached out to, “some brothers in Detroit and Chicago,” who were almost certainly a blend of Don Freeman’s RAM network (recently consolidated in August of 1963 at a meeting in Cleveland he called “The Black Vanguard Conference”) and militants from the Grassroots Leadership Conference, between which there was already some overlap.

⁹⁰ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 75-77.

According to Robinson, they, “were in agreement but apprehensive,” and recognized the potential to increase the impact, “if a Cleveland announcement were followed up by one in Detroit and Chicago.” Before making his decision, Robinson consulted with his new wife.⁹¹

The discussions of an armed self defense group in Cleveland were in step with developments elsewhere in the black revolutionary firmament. In quick succession during March of 1964 as Robinson and his allies debated the question, the February issue of Robert F. Williams’s publication *The Crusader* containing the essay “Revolution without Violence?” in which Williams raised the possibility of urban rebellion and guerrilla warfare as the basis for a black revolution, hit the U.S, making a distinct impression on revolutionary nationalists. The same month, Malcolm X announced his split with the Nation of Islam and the creation of a new, independent organization called the Muslim Mosque, Inc. Don Freeman attended the press conference and reportedly met with Malcolm afterward.⁹² Over the subsequent few weeks, Freeman tapped Max Stanford to organize a conference of black student activists the intended purpose of which was to draw SNCC and CORE members who had been active in the South and grown increasingly skeptical of nonviolence—especially after the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham on a Sunday morning in September of 1963 killed four young girls—into the revolutionary nationalist orbit. Under the auspices of the Afro-American Student Movement based out of Fisk University, the first “National

⁹¹ Ibid., 77.

⁹² William W. Sales, Jr., *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 99; Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour*, 103.

Afroamerican Student Conference on Black Nationalism” was held from May 1 to May 3, 1964. Participants attended sessions concerning the current problems of the Civil Rights movement, the “importance of black nationalism to the black man’s plight,” and the need for pan-African solidarity, along with others exploring, “social theories and concepts … relevant to the Afro-American struggle such as capitalism, socialism, imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, non-violence, self defense, [and] organized violence.”⁹³ Meanwhile, in Harlem, Malcolm X likewise, “began the job of formulating the ideology and philosophy of a new movement,” that soon crystallized into his famous speech, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” which Malcolm delivered in Cleveland on April 3, 1964, having been invited to a symposium hosted by Cleveland CORE. That night, Robinson announced the formation of the Medgar Evers Rifle Club (MERC) to protect civil rights workers in Cleveland.⁹⁴

The announcement caught the attention of local law enforcement and the FBI which opened a file on the organization two days later. Eager to make an example of Robinson, the Locher administration looked for ways to apply pressure, a task made easier by the fact that Robinson was employed by the city as housing inspector. He was suspended on April 9th and fired four days later. Declaring that, “white people want the Negro to remain passive. They feel he has no right to use the American tradition of self-

⁹³ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 115; Conference Program, Afro American Student Movement, The Papers of Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford), Personal Papers Collection of Muhammad Ahmad. Archives Unbound. Freeman was fired from his job as a teacher in the Cleveland public schools when administrators discovered an article he wrote about the conference that was published in the fall 1964 issue of *Black America*, an occasional RAM publication. See, “RAM Probe is Begun by Schools,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 28, 1965, 1.

⁹⁴ George Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks*, 21; “Louis Lomax - Malcolm X Speeches at CORE Rally Shake Up the City,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 11, 1964, 1; “Rifle Club Forming Here ‘to Protect’ Rights Drive,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 5, 1964, 1; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 77-78.

defense to achieve his rights,” Robinson appealed his firing to the Civil Service Commission which upheld the decision. Civil rights leaders who had previously worked with Robinson and the Freedom Fighters distanced themselves publicly. Harold Williams of the NAACP and UFM vowed never to call on the rifle club for protection. Ruth Turner, indicating precisely where her militant sensibilities diverged from those of Lewis Robinson and Don Freeman, also dismissed the group, saying, “the fight for civil rights is no game or adventure in military role-playing.” While his intention to form MERC placed Robinson at the bleeding edge of militant struggle in Cleveland, the resumption of the school protests later that week nonetheless revealed a broader embrace of confrontational tactics among a fairly wide swath of civil rights activists.⁹⁵

As construction began on a new elementary school in Glenville, CORE and HPA called for pickets at the construction site on Lakeview Road beginning April 6, 1964. The rift between those in the UFM coalition committed to the least confrontational methods of protest and those who advocated an aggressive approach surfaced again when several members left the picket to lay their bodies on the line, blocking the path of the earthmoving machines and other construction equipment. Police hauled protesters out of ditches and placed them under arrest. Intending to continue the protest, an even larger group returned the following day, their ranks bolstered by a gathering crowd of onlookers. Again, a number of protesters broke away from the picket line and threw themselves in the way of heavy equipment. When three people laid down in front of a

⁹⁵ Teletype, SAC, Cleveland to Director, FBI, April 5, 1964, MEDGAR EVERS CLUB, CLEVELAND, OHIO, Bureau File 157-1624; “Surveillance Set on Gun Club Here,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 6, 1964, 1; “Rifle Club Organizer Suspended by City,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 10, 1964, 1; “Rifle Club Organizer Fired From City Job,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 14, 1964, 27; “Jobless ‘Black Rifleman’ to Continue Rights Role,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 18, 1964, 1.

bulldozer, Reverend Bruce Klunder, a longtime CORE member, went around to the other side and laid down behind it. Unaware of his presence, the driver then backed over Klunder, killing him instantly. Klunder's death threw the construction site into chaos as mounted police moved in with batons to disperse the crowd.⁹⁶ The shock of grief over Klunder's death mixed with the accumulated frustration over the Board of Education's obdurate refusal to consider desegregating the schools and anger over the aggressive police response after Klunder was killed. It proved a combustible combination, exploding in an outburst of unrest that flared well into the night. Crowds of protesters and neighborhood residents reportedly numbering into the thousands smashed the windows of police cars and hurled bricks, bottles, and rocks at police officers, several hundred of whom converged on Glenville firing tear gas and wielding riot sticks in an effort to clear the streets. By midnight, an uneasy calm had settled over the area.⁹⁷

The next day, the Locher administration vowed to erect a fence to prevent protesters from entering the construction site, and filed for an injunction against further demonstrations. The UFM coalition, seeking a moratorium on school construction, moved their pickets to the Board of Education building, and finalized plans for a school boycott after Ralph McAllister, who originally agreed to suspend school construction, reversed his decision. Despite threats of prosecution and other reprisals, and with a unity of purpose unmatched by any previous UFM program, the boycott proceeded on April 20, 1964. Instead of their regular school classes, black students attended freedom schools

⁹⁶ Eugene Segal, "'Dozer' Driver Cleared, Cries, 'I Didn't See Him,'" *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1964, 1; "More Racial Violence Seen in School Crisis," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 11, 1964, 1; Frazier, "Harambee Nation," 171-174.

⁹⁷ George J. Barman, "City's Worst Rights Violence Erupts After Minister's Death," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1964, 1; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 90-96.

organized in churches and community centers throughout the East side that were established by joint action through the UFM and staffed by a massive volunteer effort. The students took classes in black history and the Civil Rights movement in addition to their regular subjects, earning a “Freedom Diploma” at the end of the day. The boycott was an overwhelming success, drawing participation from 92 percent of black families with children enrolled in school. Despite the united effort for school reform and the success of the boycott, Cleveland’s public schools would remain segregated well into the next decade.⁹⁸

During the summer of 1964, while Lewis Robinson fought to keep his job in part by arguing that his announcement of the Medgar Evers Rifle Club had been a propaganda stunt intended to shock the white community into understanding the gravity of racial inequality in Cleveland, he nonetheless proceeded to organize a rifle club. Having made contact with a black farmer named Lawrence Dozier who owned a sizable tract of land in Ashtabula County about an hour east of Cleveland, Robinson and the other rifle club members set up a shooting range. Every weekend throughout the summer, the group—which encompassed women and men, and eventually, “whole families”—left the city for the farm where they, “enjoyed a day of picnicking in the fresh air, walking and running for physical fitness, and rifle practice.” While Robinson’s description of the rifle club events suggested communal gatherings that were rather more wholesome than the training sessions of a paramilitary force the authorities feared, he nonetheless admitted

⁹⁸ George J. Barman, “Negro School Boycott Set for 60,000 Pupils,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 14, 1964, 1; Ken Temple, “UFM Issues Call,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 18, 1964, 1; Ann Skinner, “School Boycott’s Size Fails to Budge Board,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 21, 1964, 1; Robert McGruder, “Up to 45,000 at Freedom Schools,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 21, 1964, 1; Frazier, “Harambee Nation,” 176-178; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 103-106.

keeping a close eye on, “the leadership quality of the men,” in order to, “separate the dedicated ones from those who were only out for fun.” It is likely, therefore, that the Cleveland rifle club was meant to serve as both, “protection,” and “a path toward revolution,” as Simon Wendt has formulated the relationship between the black power sensibilities and self defense practices that overlapped in the 1960s.⁹⁹

Whatever its intended purpose, the rifle club brought together a collection of people whose subsequent activism would continue to transform the orientation of black political struggle in Cleveland in line with the rising call for black power during the second half of the decade. By the end of the summer a handful of people who regularly participated in rifle practices formulated plans for a new organization openly dedicated to black nationalism. The AAI which had filled such a role for two years had dissolved, with the adherents of revolutionary nationalism moving underground into the RAM network, while militants of a different stripe shifted into other organizations. Sensing a gap, Lewis Robinson, Harlhel Jones, and Albert Ware-Bey, who formed the leadership of the new organization, found a storefront for rent on Superior Avenue on the boundary between Hough and Glenville, and filed for incorporation as a nonprofit. That fall, they opened the doors on the JFK House, named for the first Prime Minister of Kenya after its independence, Jomo “Freedom” Kenyatta.¹⁰⁰

The JFK House was envisioned as a community hub providing a range of resources including, free legal and financial advice, a cooperative daycare and classes in

⁹⁹ Letterhead Memorandum, SAC, Cleveland to Director, FBI, July 2, 1965, MEDGAR EVERE RIFLE CLUB, CLEVELAND, OHIO, Bureau File 157-1624; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 121; Simon Wendt, “Protection or Path Toward Revolution,” *Souls* 9:4 (2007), 320-332.

¹⁰⁰ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 122-123.

sewing, as well as recreational facilities for teenagers. In the evenings, the center ran cultural and educational programs, including martial arts training, African and African-American history classes taught by Don Freeman (which Robinson described as, “the heaviest thing there”), and free public lectures concerning current events. Working with teenagers quickly became the center’s primary focus. The adult staff helped neighborhood kids organize dances and let them use the JFK House for club meetings. The goal, according to Robinson, was to, “get [the kids] used to working together, used to handling money and trusting each other, [in order to] build up [their] confidence in black, in themselves.”¹⁰¹ This range of its programing attracted a cross-section of the black community, enabling the JFK House to tie together political and cultural strains of black nationalism present in the city. People who showed up for a three-day art jamboree in June of 1965, for example, were not only exposed to a wealth of local black artistic talent including poetry readings, musical performances, and painting and photography exhibits, but also given information on registering to vote and encouraged to cast a ballot for Carl Stokes in his initial run for mayor. In addition to the nationalist muslims and radicals, the JFK House earned the support of several black professionals with nationalist leanings, including attorney Stanley Tolliver who provided *pro bono* legal aid. Tolliver’s support proved invaluable as heightened scrutiny from the authorities resulted in increased police

¹⁰¹ Robinson, interview, 33-36; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 127-128. FBI files suggest that what Robinson describes as martial arts classes were part of an effort led by Harlhel Jones and Albert Ware-Bey to organize a subset of JFK youth and train them as revolutionaries. The discovery of RAM documents, including training materials for the Black Guard which was the name for an intended youth cadre of RAM, indicates a close relationship between RAM and at least some of the JFK House leaders. Interviews of youth who attended these meetings, generally on Wednesday nights, indicated that Jones and Ware-Bey ran them and Robinson was not involved. The group the emerged from these session was pressed into service as body guards for Don Freeman when he delivered a speech at a rally shortly after being fired. See, Report, SA Charles A. Harvey, Cleveland, April 23, 1965, MEDGAR EVERE RIFLE CLUB, Bureau File 157-1624.

harassment of JFK House staff and kids.¹⁰²

Because the JFK House grew out of the rifle club, it immediately attracted regular surveillance from the local police—particularly the Special Investigations division, known colloquially as the subversive squad, headed by Sergeant John J. Ungvary—as well as the FBI. Moreover, many of the teenagers attracted to the JFK House had dropped out of school and had histories of drug use, vandalism, and other petty crimes. Police officers eager to malign the public reputation of the JFK House continually sought to link crimes in the neighborhood to kids who frequented the center, an approach to law enforcement that only deepened the animosity the teens felt for the police.¹⁰³ Such feelings were further inflamed when police responses to a series of skirmishes between black kids from Glenville and white kids from the adjoining Sowinski neighborhood clearly revealed a pattern of dual law enforcement. The initial episode occurred in January of 1966 when a white man and his two teenage sons were beaten up by several black teenagers on Superior Avenue which effectively marked a boundary between white and black neighborhoods. Police responded by rounding up black teenagers wholesale, detaining many of them for hours of questioning without their parents' knowledge and releasing them in the middle of the night.¹⁰⁴ Later that spring, gangs of white teenagers launched a series of attacks against black youth in and around Sowinski Park which formed another boundary between neighborhoods. Seeking to claim the park as their

¹⁰² Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 136-138.

¹⁰³ “Detective’s Account of Shooting Disputed, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 3, 1965, 2.

¹⁰⁴ “6 Nabbed in Beating of E. Side Boys, Dad,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 22, 1966, 1; “Gang Traced to JFK House,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 23, 1966, 16; Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 142; *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances*, Hearings, Western Reserve Historical Society, 127-130

territory, white teenagers also painted swastikas and the message, “Niggers keep out,” on a utility building in the park. Throughout the month of June, dozens of black youth passing through the park were beaten by white gangs. Appeals to the police by black parents met with apathy as officers proved disinclined to investigate even when kids who suffered beatings offered physical descriptions of their assailants.¹⁰⁵

With pressure building, JFK House leaders and area parents prevailed upon the Community Relations Board to intervene. The Board arranged a meeting between white and black parents and teens from the area, and a police Inspector. Asked to assign black and white officer teams to patrol the area and to investigate the spate of attacks against black youth, the police official’s noncommittal answers failed to satisfy the black teenagers who stormed out at the end of the meeting and headed for a rubble-strew lot they called the “ammo dump” to arm themselves with bricks, rocks and bottles. They targeted policemen and whites passing through the area in a surge of anger and frustration. The unrest threatened to grow entirely out of control when two white men driving down Superior Avenue fired a shot from their car, wounding a ten-year old black boy named Stephen Griffin. White-owned businesses were firebombed and vandalized in retaliation. Black leaders from the JFK House and neighborhood associations walked the streets trying to get the kids indoors, and urging restraint as CPD officers moved in to quell the disturbance.¹⁰⁶

What came to be called the Superior riot revealed in the starker possible terms

¹⁰⁵ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 148; *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances*, 93-97, 119-122, 130-135.

¹⁰⁶ Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 149-151; Robinson, interview, 30-31; *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances*, 127-130.

the burdens of racial injustice that had accumulated in Cleveland's postwar black ghetto by the mid-1960s. Despite the determined effort made by dozens, if not hundreds, of committed grassroots activists and their supporters to address the unemployment and underemployment of black workers that severely curtailed black incomes and increased poverty among black families; the overcrowded and segregated schools that provided inferior educational resources to black students, lowering their horizons and foreclosing possibilities for the future; the dilapidated housing in neighborhoods overrun with vermin and garbage that compromised the health and safety of black men, women, and children; and the police force that all too often regarded members of the black community with hostility and engaged them with violence rather than justice, these things and more constrained the world in which the black youth who frequented the JFK House, and the countless others like them in other neighborhoods on the East side, lived, and would live. The warning they issued, a prelude of things to come, went unheeded by a city administration seemingly determined to use its power to maintain the privileges that accrued to its white constituency through the perpetuation of racial injustice. The fire next time would be different, and, by degrees, the coming rebellion would reach city hall.

CHAPTER 3

BRICKS: REBELLION, COMMUNITY CONTROL, AND BLACK POWER, PART I

For five successive nights in 1966 stretching from Monday, July 18 through the end of the week on Friday, July 22, the long, hot summer erupted in Cleveland. In the 2.2 square miles encompassing Hough, the neighborhood that had by 1966 become the geographic heart of the city's black ghetto, home to a higher concentration of Cleveland's poor than any other area in the city, and a national example of urban decline, residents smashed store windows, relieved many of those establishments of their contents, and firebombed dozens of buildings—most already abandoned, vacant, and crumbling. Firefighters who battled the blazes reported coming under attack by large crowds of youth who hurled bricks, bottles, and other projectiles at firemen and on several occasions sabotaged fire hoses and other equipment. Members of the Cleveland Police Department (CPD) were called to the neighborhood after altercations between the white owners of a neighborhood bar and several black patrons attracted a large crowd whose animus was inflamed when the bar owners brandished weapons on the sidewalk in front of their establishment where the crowd had assembled. As with the firemen, Cleveland police officers reported coming under attack by a barrage of crude missiles as well as sniper fire. Eventually conceding that the situation was beyond the control of Police Chief Richard Wagner and his officers as the second night threatened to provide unrest as intense as the first, Mayor Ralph Locher called in the National Guard to quell the escalating rebellion and restore order. By week's end, as the dust from demolished buildings settled and the smoke from recently extinguished fires cleared, the casualties

were tallied. Four people were dead. All of them were black. Two had been shot in the head during outbursts of heavy of gunfire that was, according to Cleveland police, exchanged between CPD officers and people they identified as snipers. Two others were shot to death by white vigilantes. In addition to the four dead were scores of injured, millions of dollars in property damage, and a populace struggling to interpret the most explosive week of unrest the city had seen in decades.

Many in the back community, convinced that the long-simmering frustrations of Hough residents over substandard and dilapidated housing, economic exploitation by many local merchants, a discriminatory labor market which drove up unemployment, and grossly inadequate city services, including garbage collection, housing code enforcement, and impartial law enforcement, had, as predicted, reached the boiling point. In this view, such frustrations were further aggravated by the disregard that Mayor Ralph Locher and his administration had continually shown to the repeated attempts of black community groups to find solutions to these and other problems.

City leaders themselves preferred to lay blame for the uprising at the threshold of the JFK House—the grassroots community center started by Lewis G. Robinson, Harllel Jones, and Albert Ware, which primarily sought to provide recreational opportunities, host cultural and educational events, and impart a spirit of self determination to the area's dispossessed youth. The JFK House drew the scrutiny of local authorities and the FBI, who regarded the black nationalist orientation of the center's programing, along with the prior embrace of armed self defense by JFK House leadership, as evidence of violence-prone extremism. By the end of the week, Cleveland's power structure (including the

mayor, public safety director, police chief, city council president, and elements of the press) declared that the violence of the uprising was led by Hough area youth who had been trained in the production and use of molotov cocktails at the JFK House. Despite the gravity of the allegation, city authorities could produce no evidence to support it.

Undoubtedly, all of the hallmarks of urban rebellion that had flared up in selected corners of the nation during the previous three years were on display in Cleveland. Vandalism, looting, and arson were widespread, and teenagers and young adults played an active role in all of them.¹ However, such acts did not constitute the most significant violence committed during the uprising. Utterly dissatisfied with the conclusions of the official investigation into the uprising, which found the JFK House responsible, a broad cross-section of Cleveland's black community held alternative hearings at which Hough residents were invited to share their experiences of and perspectives on the uprising. The resulting testimony both contextualizes the looting and property destruction within a broader framework of racial injustice and deprivation, while also illuminating the central role Cleveland police and other armed white men played not only in provoking the unrest, but in committing the most egregious acts of violence during the uprising. In doing so, the testimony of the black men and women who bore witness in Hough invites an alternate interpretation of urban rebellion in black communities during the 1960s, one which emphasizes the twin brutalities of police violence and official neglect. Indeed, such a perspective is essential to fully understanding the increasingly widespread embrace of an openly militant posture and strident demand for power that undergirded efforts by

¹ Police officers, firemen, and National Guard troops also reported incidents of sniper fire, though, again, the evidence for this is very thin, while the pretext of sniper fire was used to justify violent police conduct.

black Clevelanders to gain control over their community in the aftermath of the uprising. This chapter and the next one accept the invitation for a new interpretation, and center the voices, ideas, and claims of black people as they examines what happened during the Hough uprising and why. The result is an account of urban rebellion shaped by the struggle between two countervailing forces: the repressive white power structure in Cleveland, and the demand for justice that fueled the quest for black power.

Though the majority of the destruction that occurred during the Hough uprising was caused by fire, the initial spark may have been ignited by a confrontation over a glass of water. July 18, 1966 was a hot day in Cleveland. The air was thick with humidity, and with the temperature hovering near 90 degrees, the heat had grown decidedly oppressive by late afternoon. The arrival of dusk that evening seemed to hold the promise of relief from the sweltering conditions. As the residents of Hough settled into their nighttime routines, a man entered the Seventy-Niners Cafe, a dingy bar on the southeast corner of Hough Avenue and East 79th Street, and bought a bottle of wine. Parched, the man also ordered a pitcher of water and a glass of ice. According to the accounts of patrons in the bar at the time, the bartender—a black woman—was directed by one of the white owners of the establishment not to serve the man water, because his was a “take-out sale.” Angered by the refusal, the man left with his wine. He soon returned, however, and posted a sign on the front door of the bar to publicize his outrage over the Seventy-

Niners' policy of providing "No Water for Niggers," as the sign read.²

The incident was only one indication of the animosity that existed between Abe and Dave Feigenbaum, the two white brothers who owned and operated the bar, and the predominantly black residents of the neighborhood who comprised the vast majority of their patrons. Earlier in the day, a woman identified by the press only as Louise had returned to the Seventy-Niners to fetch a cigar box she had left there two days before to collect donations to help defray the cost of flowers for the funeral of her recently deceased friend, Mary Sullivan. Sullivan lived a life marked by hardship, including multiple arrests for prostitution, before succumbing to a heart attack at the age of 26. She was survived by her three children, the eldest of whom was 10 years old. Louise's presence in the Seventy-Niners on July 18 angered the Feigenbaum brothers who had previously labeled both Louise and Sullivan as "undesirable characters," and banned them from the establishment. A heated exchange between Louise and Dave Feigenbaum ensued, ending only after Louise was "bodily ejected" from the bar.³

As night fell, word of both incidents spread up and down Hough Avenue, and a

² The language on the sign was reported in testimony before the Cleveland Citizens' Committee on Hough Disturbances. The Citizens' Committee held public hearings from August 22 to August 25, 1966 and collected testimony from members of the black community and the general public who were involved in or otherwise knowledgeable about events during the Hough Rebellion. A transcript of the CCCHD hearings along with a document titled, "Report of the Panel Hearings on the Superior and Hough Disturbances" is held in the library at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland. Hereafter the the hearings transcript will be cited as *Cleveland Citizens' Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*. See page 33 for the quote provided here. Alternative quotations for the language on the sign appear in newspaper accounts. For example, Daisy Craggett, "I Ran Scared with Hough Area Looters," *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 23, 1966, 1, states that the sign read: "This place will not serve colored." See also, Michael D. Roberts, "Funeral Funds Helped Spark Riot," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 23, 1966, 1, 5; and Robert G. McGruder, "Owners Deny Ice-Water Story; Charge Police Refused to Help," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 23, 1966, 11. Locations described throughout this chapter can be located on the maps provided in Appendix B.

³ Hilbert Black, "Gangs Loot, Burn Shops in Rampage," *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, A4; Daisy Craggett, "I Ran Scared with Hough Area Looters,"; Michael D. Roberts, "Funeral Funds Helped Spark Riot,"; Robert G. McGruder, "Owners Deny Ice-Water Story; Charge Police Refused to Help."

crowd, angry at the mistreatment of Louise and the man who was refused water with his wine, gathered outside the Seventy-Niners. They were confronted on the sidewalk in front of the bar by Abe and Dave Feigenbaum, both of whom brandished firearms. Abe, a former Marine, wielded a .44 caliber Ruger rifle. His brother packed a pistol. The Feigenbaums leveled their weapons at the crowd, escalating the level of outrage among the several hundred people who had by then gathered in front of the bar. Despite their brief show of force, Abe and Dave Feigenbaum, recognizing they were badly outnumbered, retreated back inside the Seventy-Niners. Members of the crowd, unwilling to abide the Feigenbaums' aggressive posture and fed up with what they considered to be a long-standing pattern of hostility directed at them by the bar-owning brothers, responded with a barrage of rocks and other projectiles that struck the exterior of the cafe. Abe Feigenbaum called the police.⁴

When the first officers arrived on the scene at approximately 9:30 p.m., they encountered a snarl of traffic at the intersection of E. 79th Street and Hough Avenue. Automobiles had backed-up along Hough Avenue, a main thoroughfare, and congested nearby side streets as several hundred pedestrians crowded the area around the Seventy-Niners Cafe, clogging the road. Patrolman James Parkinson, assigned to clear the jam, conducted traffic at the E. 79th and Hough Avenue intersection. Other officers, including fifth district captain, James Birmingham, who assumed command of the initial detachment of police officers responding to the situation, worked to scatter the crowd.

⁴ Michael D. Roberts, "Funeral Funds Helped Spark Riot"; Robert G. McGruder, "Owners Deny Ice-Water Story; Charge Police Refused to Help"; *Cleveland Citizens' Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 33, 117-118; Lewis G. Robinson, *The Making of a Man: An Autobiography*, (Cleveland: Green & Sons, 1971), 158. In his testimony before the Cleveland Citizens' Committee, David Hayward estimated the initial crowd outside the Seventy-Niners numbered between 30 and 40 people. See *Cleveland Citizens' Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 113.

Initially, the officers received assistance from Hough residents, including “an unidentified man and wife.” Birmingham credited the black couple with helping police “to quell some of the disturbances.” Despite these efforts to prevent the escalation of unrest, the momentum of the crowd was headed in the other direction. Just before 10:00 p.m., James Parkinson, still directing traffic at E. 79th and Hough, was struck on the arm by a brick thrown by a member of a crowd that, refusing to be disbursed, “converged on him from all four corners” of the intersection.⁵

Despite the increasing size and darkening mood of the crowd at E. 79th and Hough Avenue, the police did not marshal a large force to respond to the growing disturbance until after Joyce Arnett became the first fatality of the Hough rebellion when she was shot and killed while leaning out a second-story window. As the uprising grew from the initial flashpoint in front of the Seventy-Niners Cafe, a second hot spot flared up several blocks to the west in the area between E. 73rd and E. 75th on Hough Avenue. Unlike the tense standoff at the Seventy-Niners which had involved pushing, shoving, shouting, brick throwing, and other similar acts of minor physical violence, the events around E. 73rd Street turned deadly. Joyce Arnett had been walking home along Hough Avenue when police ordered her and her two companions into an apartment building at 1704 E. 73rd Street. According to Arnett's cousin, Leon McCord, who along with his wife was with Arnett that night, the police were struggling to control “a mob of kids” who had smashed the front windows and begun to loot the contents of several retail businesses in

⁵ “Woman Killed in Hough Violence,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, 1966, 1; Donald L. Bean, “‘Like Western’, Says Policeman,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 8.

the vicinity.⁶ Once inside the building, Arnett and the McCords ended up in a second-floor apartment. A cacophony of gunfire testified to the fact that the events on the street below were escalating beyond the control of the police. As the scene on the street became increasingly chaotic, Joyce Arnett, forcibly sequestered in a strange apartment several blocks from her home on E. 81st Street, fretted over the safety of her three children. In a panic, Arnett leaned out the window shouting: “I want to go home. My God, I want to go home to my kids.” The reply to her plea came swiftly, three bullets that struck her in the right side of her head and chest, wounding her critically. Arnett was taken to Mount Sinai hospital where she was pronounced dead “within minutes” of her arrival in the emergency room.⁷

Rather than helping to restore calm, many in the black community identified the conduct of the police during the initial hours of upheaval as a provocation of further unrest. “If [the police] would have done their job the way they were supposed to have instead of jeering at the crowd [at 79th and Hough Avenue] and getting them mad … I don’t think it would have went any farther,” suggested David Hayward, who lived on 79th Street and was in the area when police arrived in Hough.⁸ Likewise, another Hough resident who was present that night suggested that, despite the police mishandling the crowd outside the Seventy-Niners, the disturbance still may not have escalated had Arnett not been killed. News that a black woman had been shot spread quickly through the

⁶ “Mother Dies Calling Children to Safety,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, A4.

⁷ “Woman Killed in Hough Violence,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, 1966, 1; “Shooting Is Described by Victim’s Cousin,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, 1966, 9; Michael D. Roberts, “Hough: Death and Devastation and the Smell of Spoiling Fish,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 21, 1966, 1, 10. See, Figure D.1 in Appendix D.

⁸ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 118.

immediate area. Many in the black community believed or assumed, or knew, that a member of the Cleveland Police Department had pulled the trigger. Dennis Hilliary, who lived half a block from the Seventy-Niners Cafe, was having a drink in the bar when the altercations over the glass of water and the donation basket credited with sparking the rebellion occurred. Despite witnessing those events and the ensuing standoff, Hilliary was firm in his conviction that the shooting of Joyce Arnett “is what started it.” More specifically, Hilliary’s assertion that Arnett “was killed on 73rd [Street] because of our protection,” as he euphemistically referred to the police, reflected the perspective of many black residents of Hough angry over what they experienced as needlessly aggressive police action. “We [were] being molested by our own protection,” Hilliary reiterated. “When this lady got shot, when she died...the way the police came on the street, the way the police carried themselves—they’d shoot first and ask questions later.”⁹

Events surrounding the death of Joyce Arnett that occurred in the area where she was shot exemplified a lack of police discipline and training, revealed the ineffectiveness of the CPD response to the outbreak of unrest, and validated the perception voiced by Dennis Hilliary and shared by others that officers on the scene at E. 73rd and Hough Avenue were indeed inclined to shoot first. According to police accounts, the trouble started when officers reported coming under fire from snipers hidden on rooftops near E. 75th and Hough Avenue. In their initial response, Captain James Birmingham reported, police, “lobbed tear gas onto the rooftops of three houses in the area where the shots appeared to come from.” It may have been that the officers incorrectly identified the

⁹ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 34.

location from which the shots were fired, or it may have been that the snipers were in some way protected from the tear gas. Whatever the case, “the gas,” Captain Birmingham noted, “didn’t do much good.”¹⁰

Of course, it is also possible that the police did not come under fire from snipers at all. No snipers were found despite aggressive police action taken to find them, no policemen were wounded by gunfire (though six officers were injured by bricks and rocks thrown at them), and none of the fifty-three people arrested during the first night of the uprising was armed. Moreover, Director of Public Safety, John N. McCormick, later declared on the record that, “reports of sniper activity had been exaggerated.” “[M]uch of the ‘gunfire,’ ” McCormick continued, “has actually been fireworks.” The noise Captain Birmingham reported as sniper fire was apparently too indistinct for him to identify the type of weapon being discharged. “I don’t know what kind of guns they were using,” he admitted. Uncertainty notwithstanding, after the failed tear gas attempt, officers under Captain Birmingham’s command, “drew their revolvers and returned the fire.” They did so despite the fact that, “no order had been given.” The officers acted “instinctively,” Birmingham said. The breakdown, or initial lack, of discipline among officers on the scene is further suggested by their subsequent decision to extinguish the street lights in the area. “They made us awfully good targets,” reported Birmingham. “We shot them out.” The surrounding area, already engulfed by growing chaos, was plunged into

¹⁰ Donald L. Bean, “‘Like Western’, Says Policeman.”

darkness.¹¹

The available evidence suggests that the preponderance of the rounds fired in the area between E. 73rd and E. 75th along Hough Avenue were discharged by police officers, many of whom shot indiscriminately in the general direction of perceived threats. So many rounds were fired by officers in the area that a mobile command post police had established in a van at the E. 73rd and Hough Avenue intersection was compelled to radio fifth district headquarters shortly after midnight requesting additional ammunition and tear gas canisters. In addition, the fact that most of the rounds police fired issued from their position at street level and were intended for elevated targets (roof-top snipers, or street lamps), while snipers, if there were any, would have been firing from an elevated position down onto the police stationed on the street below, makes it difficult to accept CPD claims that Joyce Arnett was struck by sniper fire as she leaned out a second-story window. It is much more likely, given the lack of organization and discipline among the officers on the scene, the number of rounds they fired, and the trajectory along which they fired them, that the bullets that killed Joyce Arnett came from police weapons.¹²

Considering these factors, Robert Belcher, an area resident who found himself in

¹¹ The charges brought against people who were arrested during the first two nights of the uprising are detailed in, “Police Arrest 60 as Violence Explodes in Hough Again,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 6; John McCormick was quoted in, Walter Rugaber, “Trouble Persists in Hough Section,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 1966, 1, 18; Conduct of Cleveland Police Department officers in the area is detailed by Captain Birmingham in, Donald L. Bean, “Like Western”, Says Policeman.”

¹² This is also the conclusion reached by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in its final report: “Amidst widespread reports of ‘sniper fire,’ four Negroes, including one young woman [Arnett], were killed; many others, several children among them, were injured. Law enforcement officers were responsible for two of the deaths. . . .” Given the Commission’s access to medical and police records that are now unattainable, including ballistics data and coroner’s reports, there is every reason to accept the finding as factual. See, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968, 39.

circumstances similar to those of Arnett, was perhaps lucky to survive the ordeal. Belcher was at home with his family in their second-floor apartment on E. 73rd Street around the corner from the intersection with Hough Avenue when the disturbance broke out. He reported coming under fire from police: “they shot at us with bullets and tear gas,” he told a reporter for the *Plain Dealer*. Upon further investigation, the reporter vetted Belcher’s claim, finding “the three-room apartment … acrid with the smell of a broken gas canister in the bedroom,” and bullet holes in the wall above the bed.¹³

The breakdown of discipline among the police and the actions they took under the pretext of subduing a sniper they were never able to locate is not attributable to a proverbial “few bad apples” who lost their composure during a stressful and dangerous situation and overreacted. Senior police officials were in the area, including Chief of Police, Richard Wagner, who was in the immediate vicinity when Joyce Arnett was shot and killed. He arrived to lead his men around midnight, approximately the same time officers in the mobile command unit at E. 73rd and Hough radioed for a resupply of ammo. Rather than use his authority to impose order on his officers and coordinate a planned response to the situation, Wagner—armed with his personal hunting rifle—instead joined in the manhunt for the elusive snipers. A newspaper interview with Wagner revealed that sometime around 1:00 a.m. he was “trying to climb a roof on a sloping building in the area [in order to] ‘draw a bead on a sniper on an adjacent roof.’” After this attempt proved unsuccessful, the Chief subsequently took up another position on the fifth floor of the nearby Thomas Edison Occupational School, but, according to the interview,

¹³ Lawrence K. Pomeroy, “E. Siders Angered by Police Action,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 8.

“the vantage point was not high enough … to spot the hidden sniper.” Asked where the rounds that killed Joyce Arnett had come from, Wagner insinuated that the black community, or some constituent element thereof, was responsible for and may have even planned the shooting. Claiming that a death had occurred under similar circumstances during an uprising in Chicago one week earlier, Wagner concluded that, “[t]hey sacrifice one person and then blame it on police brutality.”¹⁴

Lieutenant Carl Delau, head of the homicide unit responsible for investigating Arnett’s murder, offering an alternate strain of misdirection, attempted to impugn the dead woman’s character. Complaining to a reporter that press coverage routinely noted the fact that Arnett had three small children, Delau endeavored to introduce information to portray her in a less sympathetic light. Police who searched Arnett’s person after she was shot found a pocket-knife in her possession, Delau contended. “You guys in the papers say she was a mother,” he continued. “About a year ago she was the victim in a shooting on Hough [Avenue].” Delau’s *non sequitur* notwithstanding, the fact that Arnett had previously been the victim of a shooting was evidence of nothing more than the already observable reality that Hough could be a dangerous neighborhood. Such danger was heightened by police response times to reports of crime in Hough which were, on average, twice as long as in other parts of the city, leaving Hough residents more vulnerable if and when they were victimized by criminals. Seen in this light, Arnett’s

¹⁴ Donald L. Bean, “Wagner Led Hough Forces, Sure of Police Ability in Riot,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 9. Wagner’s telling decision to patrol Hough with his personal weapon received national, as well as local, coverage. See, for example, Walter Rugaber, “Negro Killed in Cleveland; Guard Called in New Riots, *The New York Times*, July 20, 1966.

decision to carry a knife for her personal protection seems entirely prudent.¹⁵

Despite these and other efforts by police officials to obfuscate their role in Joyce Arnett's murder, any of the Hough residents living in the area around E. 73rd and Hough Avenue who were inclined to level a charge of brutality against the police operating there on the first night of the uprising had cause beyond the singular incident of Arnett's death. In addition to shooting out the street lights and firing at will at other perceived targets, police officers besieged the residents of several apartment buildings in the area between E. 73rd and E. 75th in what one newspaper reporter called "a vain effort to find a sniper." Indeed, locating a sniper seemed at best a secondary task to many residents of the apartment buildings raided by police. "You know snipers couldn't hide in either one of these places," said Raymond O'Neal, a tenant in the apartment building at 7310 Hough Avenue, revealing a broken phonograph and broken tape recorder to newspaper reporters. According to O'Neal, the items were destroyed by police after they "broke into his apartment." Mrs. Ruby Harvey, a neighbor of Raymond O'Neal, had the apartment in which she lived with her husband and six children "torn apart" by police who left "furniture strewn about," and broke her television set which was left "lying on the floor of the kitchen." As was the case with Mr. O'Neal, Mrs. Harvey's apartment was broken into by police who kicked in her front door in order to gain entry. Implicitly challenging

¹⁵ See, Michael D. Roberts, "Hough: Death and Devastation and the Smell of Spoiling Fish." Data on CPD response times can be found in, United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 848. Two other accounts of Arnett from members of the black community offer conflicting portraits of her involvement in previous civil rights campaigns in Cleveland. According to Charles Sutton, who described himself as her "common-law husband," Arnett, "didn't care nothing about race things," Michael D. Roberts, "Hough: Death and Devastation and the Smell of Spoiling Fish." Alternatively, Lewis G. Robinson reported that Arnett had been involved as a tenant organizer in a rent strike carried out in 1965 by members of the Ohio Freedom Fighters and Cleveland CORE. See, Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 169.

the stereotypical image of Hough residents as lazy welfare dependents, Mrs. Harvey made clear that she had “worked hard all my life to maintain this home for my family. Now, I don’t know what I’ll do.”¹⁶ Mrs. Bertha Pollard witnessed “policemen shooting across the street,” before retiring to bed with her husband sometime around 10:00 p.m.. They were roused when police kicked down both the front and back doors to their apartment. Once inside, the policemen ordered Mrs. Pollard out of bed, out of the apartment building, and into the rain at gunpoint. When Mrs. Pollard sought shelter from the rain under a tree, the police cursed at her and insisted she “get out from under that tree[, and] get in the rain.” By that point, Mrs. Pollard was separated from her husband whom the police had “pulled” out of bed before “slinging him down the basement steps.” It was the last Mrs. Pollard would see of her husband until the following morning when he came to meet her at the fifth district police station where she had been detained overnight with several of her neighbors. Like Mr. O’Neal and Mrs. Harvey, the Pollards returned home to find that their belongings had been disturbed: “all the stuff was just thrown all over the floor,” Mrs. Pollard reported.¹⁷ In another incident, Edward Adams was on the front porch of his apartment building “watching the action,” with several others. The group eventually sought a safer vantage point inside Adams’s apartment because the police, “were doing so much shooting and throwing tear gas.” The apartment

¹⁶ Mr. O’Neal and Mrs. Harvey were among the several tenants of the apartment building at 7310 Hough Avenue to share their experiences of police conduct with reporters from the *Call and Post*, the black-owned weekly newspaper in Cleveland. Reporters from Cleveland’s two white-owned dailies did not cover the incident. “Tenants Charge Unnecessary Vandalism, Roughness,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 23, 1966, 1, 2A.

¹⁷ Mrs. Pollard was among the residents of 7310 Hough Avenue who testified before the Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on the Hough Disturbances. Her testimony regarding the conduct of police officers during their raid of her apartment can be found in, *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 25-31.

quickly proved to be an inadequate refuge:

The next thing, they shot the front door down to my apartment [building], then they came in, laid everyone men and women alike on the floor. ... There were about six or seven shotguns. ... One girl in the apartment, she was crying when they came in, when she saw the shotguns. They came in cursing. ... They made us go to jail with our hands over our heads. I asked if I could go in my pockets and get my keys, so they could lock the apartment, they cursed and hit me. Then I heard some noise as if they were tearing something up.

Adams returned the next morning to find his record player destroyed.¹⁸

As terrifying and upsetting as such instances of home invasion and property destruction by armed police undoubtedly were, other residents in the same building reported suffering still greater outrages. Mrs. Ethel Wilder shared an apartment with her adult daughter Mrs. Frankie Frann. According to Mrs. Frann, one of the policemen who raided her apartment kicked her mother, whom Frann described as “elderly,” down a flight of stairs after she “protested against leaving the building.” Mrs. Wilder, who suffered substantial bruises on her arms and legs, was not alone in resisting efforts of the police to force apartment residents to leave the relative safety of their homes and contend with the obviously chaotic and dangerous circumstances outside. A number of men in the building were arrested and taken to jail for acts of resistance similar to that of Mrs. Wilder. One of the men arrested was Ruby Harvey’s husband, John, who was hauled off to jail “in [just] his shorts,” after police refused to let him get dressed. Mr. Harvey was joined by the husband of Mrs. Ludella McCruel who, in the most egregious example of poor judgement exercised by police in their raid of the apartment building at 7310 Hough Avenue, was arrested and taken to jail with the couple’s nine-month old baby. Another child, seven years old, was forced “to march out of the apartment house with his arms

¹⁸ Ibid., 19-25.

behind his head,” by police who held him at gunpoint the entire way.¹⁹

Ms. Gwendolyn Franklin was at home with her fifteen-year old son and three of his friends who became trapped at Franklin’s apartment when the police began shooting. “It sounded like they were shooting in the hallway,” Franklin said, recounting her ordeal before the Cleveland Citizens Committee on the Hough Disturbances. “We had to crawl and run to the bathroom,” she continued. As was the case with her neighbors, the police kicked in Franklin’s door and entered her apartment with their guns drawn. According to Franklin:

they cursed at us, they threw me down the steps, and my son down the steps, and his friends down the steps ... One policeman told us to stand in the hallway. When we were standing in the hallway, the policemen in the street shot in[to] the hallway, and we had to jump into ... apartment two.²⁰

The police forced Ms. Franklin, her son, and his friends outside into the rain and subjected them to further abuse:

they kicked my son. ... They hit [him] in the side, and they told him, “we ought to shoot you because I believe you could start a riot.” I said, don’t you shoot my son because he’s only 15 years old ... and they kicked him, hit him, and they woulda shot him, but there was a man [wearing] a blue suit, a uniform ... that’s the only thing that stopped them from shooting him. They [took] us to the wagon and they patted me down. I thought only policewomen were suppose[d] to pat you down, but policemen patted me down, and can’t nobody tell me what the police won’t do. I know what they will do. They did it[.] [T]hey patted me down like I wasn’t a woman.²¹

Ms. Franklin and her son were taken to jail with their neighbors and held overnight in separate cells. She was charged with disorderly conduct. When the Franklins returned home, they found both doors to their apartment standing open, and, according to Ms.

¹⁹ “Tenants Charge Unnecessary Vandalism, Roughness,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 23, 1966, 1, 2A; See also, Bob Williams and Daisy Craggett, “Wounded Citizens Cry Out, ... Were Police the Snipers?,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 13, 1966, 1, 2A.

²⁰ Mrs. Franklin’s testimony can be found in, *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 45-51. For this quote, see, 46-47.

²¹ Ibid., 47.

Franklin, “some of my clothes were in the backyard … my television was broken … my bed was broken[,] and my \$40.00 [of] food stamps were gone.”²² Despite the vandalism, property destruction, and brutal treatment of women and children at the hands of police during their raid on 7310 Hough Avenue and other apartment buildings in the area under the pretext of searching for snipers, no such persons were ever found.

Whether spurred on by anger over police misconduct, grievances against the owners of specific neighborhood businesses, or a more general desire to join in the action, the uprising in Hough continued to spread late into the night. Six people were arrested for looting at the Savmor Supermarket at 8304 Hough Avenue. Rather than pacifying the area, the arrests spurred the formation of a mob. Suddenly outnumbered, the police on the scene called desperately for backup. Such conditions spread along Hough Avenue between E. 71st street and E. 93d Street, and for several blocks north and south as the uprising gained intensity. Along with grocery stores, other retail establishments that provided necessary items, like drug stores, proved to be especially common targets for looters. Around midnight, calls reached police radio headquarters indicating that Brown’s Drug store was being emptied of most of its contents. Soon thereafter, another group several blocks away at E. 77th and Lexington Avenue worked to strip Allen’s Drug bare. When police arrived on the scene at 1:00 a.m., they could do little but report back that Allen’s had already been “torn apart.” The empty cash register lay on the sidewalk in a pile of shattered glass and other debris. Within minutes, more trouble broke out nearby as police made four more arrests ten blocks west at E. 65th and

²² Ibid., 49.

Lexington. Twenty blocks east from there, looting was reported at the Bi-Rite discount store at Crawford Road and Hough Avenue.²³

The area around the intersection of Crawford Road and Hough Avenue became a tertiary epicenter of activity after the uprising spread from its initial flashpoint at E. 79th and Hough Avenue and the secondary hot spot between E. 73rd and E. 75th. Firemen battling a blaze one block away from Crawford Road at E. 85th and Hough Avenue reported to police just before 1:30 a.m. that they were “pulling out” because they were “being shot at.” Police dispatch requested officers nearby to escort the firemen back to the fire. More looting at E. 84th and Hough was reported. Almost simultaneously, police reported that a man had been “badly shot at Crawford and Hough.” The man in question, who became the second gunshot casualty that night, was Wallace Kelly.²⁴

Though Kelly would survive, he sustained severe injuries which required emergency surgery and four-week hospital stay. Testifying before the Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on the Hough Disturbances, Kelly recalled details about the unrest unfolding around the Crawford Road and Hough Avenue intersection in the moments before police shot him. His description revealed a state of affairs strikingly similar to the fracas between 73rd and 75th streets on Hough Avenue where Joyce Arnett was killed. Kelly and his sister were visiting with friends in an apartment on Hough Avenue near the intersection with Crawford Road when the uprising erupted in the area. Kelly left the apartment to determine what was going on, and found that “things were on fire, and

²³ Jerry Kvet, “All Night Police Radio Droned: ‘Store Burning … Looting … Help Needed,’ *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, A4. A photograph on the same page of the newspaper shows the cash register from Allen’s Drug lying on the sidewalk in front of the store.

²⁴ Ibid.

people were breaking into different stores, and tearing things up.” Then, according to Kelly, “two policemen got out of their car and started to shoot up at the lights, putting them out, and shot all up and down the street.” As the level of danger intensified, Kelly returned to his friends’ apartment. The group there had decided to leave the area to seek the safety of the apartment Kelly shared with his sister in the Kinsman neighborhood three miles south of Hough. Kelly went back outside to assess the conditions for their departure and found that they had worsened rapidly. A nearby dry cleaners had been set ablaze. He returned to his friends’ apartment to report the fire to his sister and their friends. No sooner had he done so than, “the policemen were shooting all up and down through the air.” Kelly waited in the living room while his sister helped pack some clothes for the couple and their daughter. At that point, Kelly testified:

I turned around facing the screen door, and when I faced the screen door I seen this cop stand up on the lady’s step and shoot straight through the screen door, and I seen a great big ball of fire[.] I pushed my sister, and I tried to get out of the way, and it hit me. If I had not gotten out of the way when I did, it would have hit me in the face.²⁵

As it was, the spray of shotgun pellets struck Kelly in his chin and neck. He tried to tell his sister he had been shot, but found himself unable to talk. Distraught, Kelly’s sister and friends picked Kelly up and brought him outside:

... out on the sidewalk, about eight or nine cops were standing ... with their shotguns and they had cocked them and drawed them on me again, and my sister and the lady said, “don’t shoot him, he has already been shot for nothing as it is.”²⁶

Kelly’s sister and friends succeeded in getting him loaded into a patrol wagon. After initially heading in the wrong direction, the police officer driving the wagon turned

²⁵ Wallace Kelly’s testimony appears in, *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 62-69. For this quote, see, 64-65.

²⁶ Ibid., 65.

around and brought Kelly to Mount Sinai hospital.

Kelly was fortunate that the impromptu detour did not result in a longer delay; he may not have survived his injuries had he arrived at the hospital much later than he did. Obviously terrified, his shirt soaked through with blood, Kelly held a cloth up to his jaw as his sister guided him into the emergency room. Doctors immediately performed an emergency tracheotomy, opening an airway to allow Kelly to breath before they could begin additional surgery. The shotgun blast destroyed part of Kelly's tongue and shattered his lower jaw. The bone fragments were removed along with four of his teeth. Doctors also removed shotgun pellets from Kelly's neck, although the location of two of the pellets near his carotid artery prevented their removal due to the risk of complications. Kelly had lost a considerable volume of blood, so much, in fact, that he needed a transfusion. After the surgery, doctors wired Kelly's jaw shut. He spent four weeks convalescing at Mount Sinai.²⁷

The unrest around the Crawford Road intersection with Hough Avenue continued into the early morning hours of Tuesday, July 19th. At 1:36 a.m. firemen fearing that things "may get out of control" requested another fire company be sent to help extinguish a fire at E. 94th and Hough Avenue. By 2:00 a.m., while four buildings were already burning at E. 85th and Hough Avenue, "someone [was] setting fire to [a] gas station" at E. 89th and Hough. Firemen from Battalion 8 on the scene at the E. 85th Street fire requested assistance from an additional fire truck. The truck was sent, accompanied by a police escort. Reports of continued looting went out over the police radio and revealed

²⁷ Ibid., 65-66. See also, Bob Williams and Daisy Craggett, "Wounded Citizens Cry Out, ... Were Police the Snipers?" See Figure D.2 in Appendix D.

that establishments located beyond the epicenter of the unrest along Hough Avenue were being hit. As was true earlier in the evening, supermarkets remained prime targets. Two more SavMor Supermarket locations, one on E. 78th and Lexington Avenue and another on E. 81st and Euclid Avenue, were pillaged. A record store on E 66th and Lexington Avenue was struck just after 3:00 a.m.. As dawn approached, another rash of fires broke out. Shortly before 4:30 a.m., Bill's Bar was “burned to the ground” at E. 86th and Hough Avenue. That blaze was followed less than ten minutes later by a “monstrous fire” at the intersection of Crawford Road and Hough Avenue where a building housing “a grocery store, vacant drug store and apartments” was eventually reduced to rubble.²⁸

The embers from the largest of these pre-dawn fires continued to smolder as day broke over Hough on Tuesday, July 19. Altogether, at least a dozen fires plus widespread vandalism and looting during the first night of the uprising caused property damage initially estimated at close to one million dollars. In addition to Joyce Arnett and Wallace Kelly, two other black people were wounded by gunfire. Alton Burks was “shot twice in the right leg,” near E. 75th Street and Lexington Avenue, and Charles Davis sustained a bullet wound on his heel as he stood in front of his home on Hough Avenue near E. 75th Street. Six policemen and a fireman were treated at Mount Sinai hospital for injuries caused by rocks and bricks thrown at them, as were several civilians, including a white couple injured by broken glass when a window on the bus they were riding to work was smashed by projectiles. Police arrested fifty-three people on charges of “disorderly

²⁸ Jerry Kvet, “All Night Police Radio Droned: ‘Store Burning … Looting … Help Needed’; “Hough’s 2d Night: 38 Fires, 53 Alarms,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 5.

conduct, looting, and throwing objects at police.”²⁹ City officials deployed “four front-end loaders, eight street sweepers, nineteen trucks and the crews to man them, plus twenty Youth Corps youngsters,” to clean up the debris strewn throughout the Hough Area.³⁰

Mayor Ralph Locher had previously planned to spend a portion of Tuesday, July 19, touring sections of the Glenville and University-Euclid neighborhoods affected by the mismanagement of the city’s urban renewal programs. Locher’s promise to visit the area came only after a heated and prolonged standoff with Leo Jackson, city councilman for Cleveland’s 24th ward in which the neighborhoods were located, and chair of the Council’s urban renewal committee. In a “stormy” meeting with the Mayor on Monday, July 18, Jackson presented Locher with photographs revealing evidence of the blighted conditions, including “overflowing garbage cans, illegally parked cars, [and] abandoned houses,” that had spread into Glenville. In Jackson’s view, such issues resulted from the displacement of poor people through the city’s urban renewal land clearance programs and the consequent spread of poverty into previously stable, black working-class neighborhoods like Glenville. Moreover, Jackson was incensed by the Locher administration’s failure to maintain city services and address other problems that were properly the concern of city agencies. Wielding the modest power conferred by his chairmanship of the City Council’s urban renewal committee, Jackson refused to convene the committee or act on pending legislation to reorganize the city’s urban renewal

²⁹ “One Dead in Ohio,” *The New York Times*, July 19, 1966, 1; “Woman Killed in Hough Violence,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, 1966, 1; Hilbert Black, “Gangs Loot, Burn Shops in Rampage.”

³⁰ This information is quoted from an untitled note appearing on page 1, column 5 of *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966.

department until he received a guarantee from the Mayor that his administration would ensure adequate garbage collection, housing-code enforcement, and police protection in Glenville.³¹

As if to demonstrate in inescapable terms the eventual consequences of perpetually avoiding the very problems Councilman Jackson urged Locher to see for himself in Glenville, the outbreak of unrest in Hough shifted the Mayor's planned itinerary. Instead of visiting Glenville Tuesday morning, Locher began his day touring the wreckage of Hough. At 8:00 a.m., accompanied by city urban renewal officials, Locher was guided by an assistant fire chief through the areas along Hough Avenue that sustained the greatest damage during the first night of unrest. Surveying the destruction, Locher called it "a tragic day in the life of our city."³²

Returning to his office at City Hall, Locher began a day of emergency meetings, the first of which was attended by Executive Director of the Community Relations Board (CRB), Bertram E. Gardner; co-Chair of the CRB, Ezra Shapiro; Safety Director John N. McCormick; and Barton Clausen, director of the city's urban renewal program. The group concerned itself with identifying the causes of the uprising in Hough, and considering the appropriate response from the administration. In Locher's view the uprising was perpetrated by "snipers and other lawless groups" that targeted "policemen and firemen and innocent civilians." Despite his bold assertion that his administration "absolutely will not tolerate" such actions, and his forthright vow to "utilize the full

³¹ Paul Lilley, "Locher to Tour Glenville Area to Check Jackson's Complaints," *The Cleveland Press*, July 18, 1966, 1; "Locher to Tour Renewal Area," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, 1966, 15.

³² Paul Lilley, "Locher Doubts State Troops Needed Now," *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, 1, 5; "'Tragic Day in Our City,' Locher Says," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 9.

weight of the Police Department” to prevent their recurrence, Locher grew decidedly vague when pressed for a longer-term solution. His tepid suggestion that “there must be remedial steps taken to bring about cessation and the slackening of the pace of tension that existed last (Monday) night,” distanced his office from the responsibility of actually taking such steps. Instead, Locher shifted the onus to the neighborhood’s residents, calling for “all responsible citizens of Hough to use their counsel and good offices to restore the area to normal.”³³

Not everyone at that morning meeting shared the Mayor’s interpretation of the previous night’s events as merely an outburst of lawlessness. Asked about the cause of the unrest by reporters assembled at a City Hall press conference that morning, Bertram Gardner, who had left his post as the Executive Secretary of the Glenville YMCA to serve as the Executive Director of the Cleveland Community Relations Board only six months prior, mentioned the trouble at the Seventy-Niners Cafe before making clear his view that “the real provocation [was] deep frustration.” Persistent problems with inadequate housing, limited employment opportunities, and overcrowded schools in Hough played their part, Gardner suggested, but they were only symptomatic of the ongoing “deterioration of the total community.” Stating that he, too, identified “with many of the frustrations,” Gardner nonetheless voiced his disapproval of the “methods used” to express that frustration. Weighing his professional obligation to represent the Locher administration against his personal frustration over the unmet needs of the black community in Cleveland, Gardner took a slightly more nuanced public stance than the

³³ Ibid.

Mayor's straightforward law and order position. While he rejected the characterization subsequently advanced by Locher and Chief of Police Richard Wager that the uprising was "inspired by an organized gang," or by Communist agitators, Gardner nonetheless thought that the spontaneous explosion of unrest demonstrated "black nationalism being acted out by the wrong people."³⁴

Taking a position more directly critical of the Locher administration, Ernest Cooper, Executive Director of the Urban League of Cleveland laid responsibility for the unrest squarely at the feet of the Mayor. Noting continued efforts by black community leaders to focus Locher's attention on the disaffection brewing in Hough and Glenville, especially in the recent weeks following a series of skirmishes in June between white and black youth along Superior Avenue, Cooper charged Locher with being "more interested in controlling the situation than attempting to work out the problems that cause this violence." Arguing that "the root causes have been enumerated over and over again," Cooper challenged black community leaders and officials in the city's power structure "to do something about these causes, to give concrete evidence to those persons who find themselves frustrated ... that a positive change is taking place around the pressing problems they face in everyday life." Growing more specific in his call for action, Cooper reaffirmed the crucial need for the basic ingredients of stable communities, including jobs and job training, better housing, adequate recreational facilities and health services, and income sufficient to "enable [Hough area residents] to feed and house their families."³⁵

³⁴ Doris O'Donnell, "Rioting Blamed on Negro Frustration," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 9. See also, Paul Lilley, "Locher Doubts State Troops Needed Now."

³⁵ Doris O'Donnell, "Rioting Blamed on Negro Frustration."

Cooper was not alone in his analysis of the underlying causes of the uprising in Hough or his critique of Locher's unwillingness to deal with brewing racial tensions in the weeks leading up to the unrest. A statement released by Cleveland CORE on Wednesday charged "all responsible administrators and businessmen of this city ... with failure to meaningfully address themselves to the basic problems that confront the black community." The CORE statement averred the basic injustice of racial and economic inequality underlaying the frustration of Hough residents, and even as the organization's leadership declared itself unable to "condone" the method through which that frustration was vented, their interpretation of the outbreak of unrest in Hough as an "uncontrolled demonstration" linked the uprising to the pickets, boycotts, marches, and other expressions of black political protest in Cleveland in recent years. Echoing the sentiments of Cooper and CORE, the Council of Churches of Christ of Greater Cleveland decried "the inability or unwillingness of city leadership to understand the depth of discontent and desperation felt by large numbers of Cleveland Negroes."³⁶

The most strident public criticism of Locher and other Cleveland officials in the wake of the first night of unrest in Hough came from Lewis Robinson. Recalling the recent physical clashes between white youth from the Sowinski neighborhood and black youth from the adjacent neighborhoods of Hough and Glenville known as the Superior riot, and the subsequent inaction of the Locher administration in response to a list of

³⁶ "Riot Comments Dwell on Negro Frustration," *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, A6. Following a couplet of annual conferences held in 1963 and 1964, the CCCGC was reorganized to include a Metropolitan Affairs Commission led, initially, by the Reverend Charles W. Rawlings. The intended purpose of the MAC was to direct "issue-centered action" concerning race, civil rights, and poverty in Cleveland. Thereafter, the CCCGC took a more active role in black political struggle in Cleveland. The records of the Metropolitan Affairs Commission can be found in the Council of Churches of Christ of Grater Cleveland Records, Series IV, Western Reserve Historical Society.

grievances held by the youth and other members of the black community living in the vicinity of Superior Avenue, Robinson lambasted the Mayor for “miss[ing] his chance to end racial problems here.” Insinuating that Locher himself rather than the organization or operation of his administration was to blame for mishandling both the aftermath of the Superior riot and the initial response to the unrest in Hough, Robinson claimed that “racial prejudice and political expediency blinded [Locher’s] thinking.” Equally problematic for Robinson was the conduct of the police. Drawing a parallel between the failure of CPD officers to adequately investigate the shooting of ten-year-old Stevie Griffith by a white man during the Superior riot and the immediate shifting of blame for the shooting of Joyce Arnett during the first night of the Hough uprising onto the black community, Robinson gave voice to long-held and widely-shared perceptions of unprofessional, inadequate, and discriminatory conduct of CPD officers, calling, again, for the creation of a police review board.³⁷

Despite these criticisms of his leadership and the conduct of the police, Locher maintained his focus on law enforcement. Holding his second emergency meeting of the day, the Mayor huddled with Safety Director McCormick and Chief Wagner to marshal the resources of the city’s police department in order to suppress a recurrence of unrest in Hough. The plan was simple: “We are prepared to meet force with force,” McCormick declared, indicating that the pervasive gunfire and wanton brutality exhibited by CPD officers on Monday night had effectively become sanctioned policy by Tuesday.³⁸ Despite all evidence to the contrary, Chief Wagner was certain of the CPD’s ability to

³⁷ “Repeats Plea for Review of Police Acts,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, B7.

³⁸ “Pressure to Call Guard Was Heavy,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 8.

maintain control over Hough. “This situation will not get out of hand,” Wagner insisted in a bold display of hubris, “because I’ve got my men there to see that it won’t.” Calling in the National Guard, Wagner thought, was unnecessary at the present time. Locher agreed. “This thing is not out of control,” he stated flatly, though he avowed his willingness to ask for help from Governor James Rhodes, “if the time comes when we think it is.”³⁹

Locher’s conviction that the unrest of the first night of the Hough uprising was simply an outbreak of lawlessness to be corrected by robust law enforcement left him unwilling to take any immediate action to remedy the root causes of black unrest. While Locher was joined in that view by his Chief of Police and Safety Director, the violence and destruction of Monday night catalyzed a flurry of hasty action by local business and religious leaders, city administrators, and federal officials on programs designed to ameliorate some of the most pressing concerns outlined by leaders of the black community. Guided by the belief that “[a]ll the tension and unrest throughout the country stems from unemployment,” a group of about forty black building contractors in Cleveland assembled Tuesday evening to form the United Contractors Association. Meeting at the Cedar Avenue YMCA, the men quickly selected officers and laid out plans to develop an apprenticeship program for black youth.⁴⁰ The following day, Charles A. Vanik, the Congressman representing the district that included Hough, appeared to strike a similar tone, asserting that “[t]he problems of Hough can be permanently solved through employment opportunities.” Despite his overly-simplistic analysis of the

³⁹ Donald L. Bean, “Wagner Led Hough Forces, Sure of Police Ability in Riot”; Paul Lilley, “Locher Doubts State Troops Needed Now.”

⁴⁰ “Apprentice Program for Negroes Set,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 4.

“problems of Hough,” Vanik managed to secure additional federal funds for Youth Corps, a summer jobs program for low-income youth. Even so, the \$1.25 per hour wage and the limited ability of Youth Corps workers engaged in menial tasks through “community work assignments” to develop skills necessary for higher-wage jobs, as well as the expansion of the Youth Corps in Cleveland to include boys as young as fourteen, reveal a program designed to keep idle teenagers temporarily occupied rather than to make a meaningful intervention into the systemic problem of unemployment among black youth in high-poverty neighborhoods.⁴¹

Along with these efforts to confront unemployment, the Cuyahoga County Savings and Loan League, seeking to address the lack of decent housing in Hough, established a \$10,000 interest-free revolving loan for Housing Our People Economically (HOPE, Inc.), a community organization established in June, 1965 that had purchased several dilapidated apartment buildings and other homes in Hough with the goal of renovating the properties and renting them at affordable rates to neighborhood residents. While the primary focus of HOPE, Inc. was on housing, the organization also sought to use the renovation projects as job training sites where neighborhood men could gain increased skill in carpentry and home repair.⁴² In addition, despite years of inadequate sanitary code enforcement, Robert J. Kelly, Service Director for the city, announced on Wednesday a plan to clear trash and piles of debris that had accumulated in Hough and

⁴¹ Robert Crater, “Vanik Urges More Summer Jobs Now for Needy Hough Youths,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, C9; Bob Modic, “Summer Job Program Here Receives Boost,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, A16.

⁴² Details of the fund can be found in, Pat Royse, “HOPE Inc. Granted \$10,000 Aid Fund,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, F5. The goals and operation of HOPE are detailed in testimony offered by HOPE Chairman Walter Grevatt. See, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 77-93.

other blighted sections of the city. Identifying nearly 600 properties on Cleveland's East side, the majority of which were owned by absentee landlords, Kelly vowed to "move in with front-end loaders and trucks" to haul away the garbage at the expense of the property owners.⁴³ As welcome as these efforts were, they fell well short of meeting the need that had built up over a decade, and had little effect on the immediate situation in Hough.

Away from City Hall, out along Hough Avenue and throughout the wider neighborhood, immediate reaction to the first night of unrest among the people who lived or worked in Hough varied widely. R.S. Milner, who managed a shoe store on Hough Avenue, sounded a note of incomprehension at the destruction caused by the vandalism, looting, and burning of the first night: "They are burning up their homes and their jobs ... they are burning up their payday day and hurting our own people," he said.⁴⁴ The view that Hough residents themselves would suffer the greatest consequences of the unrest was shared by others, including Ceola King, an anti-poverty worker, and her mother, Martha Bolden, who served as the President of the Hough Community Council. "The tragedy," said King, "is that the clothes that burned up in that dry cleaner's shop that was set on fire are the clothes of the people who live here. It's their stores that were wrecked and looted, damaged and closed. The hardships created are going to be the hardships of the people who live in Hough."⁴⁵

⁴³ Norman Mlachak, "City to Get Tough on Trash Removal," *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, B6.

⁴⁴ Robert G. McGruder, "Older People of Hough Want No Part of Trouble," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 1.

⁴⁵ Bob Modic, Why Do People Hurt Themselves? Saddened Hough Residents Ask," *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, A5.

Not everyone was convinced. Jack Bey, the owner of a dry cleaners on Crawford Road that, along with many black-owned businesses in the area survived the night unscathed, accepted the uprising as a positive indication of the arrival of a militant struggle for black liberation in Cleveland. “This has been a long time coming and it’s about time,” Bey said. “It’s too bad some of our own people have to suffer, but whitey believes in making sacrifices for freedom and so do we,” he concluded. “The white man,” insisted Julius X, “is reaping what he has sown. He is learning you can’t push people around.” James Jackson, a resident of Hough Avenue, estimated that “about 90 [percent] of the people out here want to get whitey.”⁴⁶ Jamie Green, a Hough resident and journalist, saw still another positive effect of the unrest. Arguing that, “we’ve done the city a favor,” Green suggested that the arsonists who torched buildings on Monday night had in fact performed a necessary task that the city had failed at. “Look at the urban renewal we’ve accomplished,” Green challenged.⁴⁷

Others could not afford to be so philosophical. While the great majority of fires had been set in buildings that were previously abandoned and dilapidated, several families were displaced when a fire set in a small grocery store spread to an adjacent apartment building at 8709 Hough Avenue. Fifteen-year-old Charles Pope lived with his family in one of the units in the building. They lost all of their possessions in the fire. From his perspective, Pope found the excitement and jubilation expressed by some of his age-set on Tuesday morning inappropriate, pointing out that “they would feel differently

⁴⁶ Robert G. McGruder, “Older People of Hough Want No Part of Trouble,” 1.

⁴⁷ Bob Modic, “Hate, Revenge, Sorrow and Shock Divide Hough Residents,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, A2.

if it was their homes and everything that were being destroyed.” Likewise, Franklin Saunders, who lived around the corner from the building the Pope family had been burned out of, was upset by the destruction in his neighborhood and the additional burden it placed on his already full load of responsibilities. “These kids doing these things don’t have to go to the store,” Saunders told a reporter who was canvassing the neighborhood for local reaction. “But I got seven kids to feed,” he continued, “and I’ll have to go over to Euclid Ave. to the store now.” Like Bertram Gardner and other official spokespersons had done downtown, Saunders, who was unemployed, identified with the frustrations vented during the uprising while taking issue with the mode of expression: “Sure I’d like a job. But you don’t solve nothing by burning everything down.” Wallace Kelly agreed—up to a point. Averring that “burning down this and burning that … does not make no sense,” Kelly instead proposed what was for him a more strategic course of action: “If you are going to burn down something, why not take it to a white neighborhood and burn it down.”⁴⁸

To be sure, the most visible impact of the first night of unrest could be seen in the wreckage of the physical landscape. Shards of plate glass from shattered storefront windows littered the streets with an assortment of other debris. Enormous piles of still-smoldering rubble sat smoking. One CPD patrolman compared the scene to “London in the bombings of WWII.”⁴⁹ The obvious exaggeration notwithstanding, the spectacle of destruction was the compelling attraction, drawing the attention of neighborhood

⁴⁸ Ibid.; *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 69.

⁴⁹ Norman Mlachak, “Just Like a War, Awed Policemen and Firemen Say,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, A5.

residents, city officials, news reporters and photographers, and other curious onlookers.

But while the cleanup continued throughout the day along the main thoroughfares of Hough, evidence of a second, less-visible reconfiguring could be found in back alleys and other out-of-the-way corners where a surreptitious trade in looted merchandise supplied some of the needs and wants of local residents. Two reporters from the *Plain Dealer* in Hough on Tuesday to cover the effect of looting on the small businesses that had been hit were hipped to the existence of the nascent micro-economy by a couple of locals. A provisional open-air market had been set up behind a bowling alley where ten dollars was enough to buy a new suit, the reporters were told. Hard liquor sold for three dollars a fifth. The same volume of wine went for fifty cents. Meat was for sale behind a nearby unidentified school where “prime beef” could be had for \$1.25 per pound. Another reporter working the same beat for the *Cleveland Press* claimed to have been offered a “new suede jacket” for fifteen dollars, marked down from fifty. Another man, pleased with his recent purchase of a pocket watch for twenty-five cents, assured the *Press* reporter that, “you can get almost anything you want pretty cheap.”⁵⁰

It is impossible to determine the volume of business conducted at the open-air markets that mushroomed overnight, or to accurately gauge the amount of merchandise taken during the upheaval the night before with the intent of reselling it later. Press coverage by the daily papers portrayed the looting of stores as part of a frenzied free-for-all with people grabbing everything in sight, projecting an image of looters as profiteers whose pursuit of personal enrichment through illegal means put hardworking small-

⁵⁰ Michael D. Roberts and James Van Vliet, “Plunderers Profit; Merchants Quit,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 1, 8; Pat Royse, “Hough’s Looters Offer ‘Bargains’,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, A4.

business owners out of business. “Plunderers Profit; Merchants Quit,” was the terse assessment of the editorial staff of *The Plain Dealer*, appearing as a front-page headline on Wednesday morning. A brief item titled, “The Hough Story: Violence, Looting” appearing on a page of photographs showing scenes from Monday night explained that “looters and arsonists loosed a savage storm of destruction.” “It was cookies and ice cream for youngsters scavenging in a grocery store,” the report said, while the white owner of another business, “wrung his hands at the sight of his meat market.” A private security guard at a PayLess Supermarket interviewed by a reporter for *The Cleveland Press* described looters “going through the window in droves. … They were taking everything—groceries, meat, beer, cigarettes—anything they could get their hands on.”⁵¹

While some who ransacked stores may well have been motivated by the prospect of flipping the loot for a quick profit, others took what they could in order to meet the very real material needs of their families. Indeed, of the 51,565 black people living in Hough in 1965, fully 21,177 of them (41 percent) lived below the poverty level, among whom were 10,601 children under the age of fourteen.⁵² An eyewitness account provided by Daisy Craggett, an occasional reporter for the *Call and Post* who also worked as a social worker in Hough and served on a handful of community committees, offers evidence supportive of a more nuanced analysis of the looting carried out during the first

⁵¹ The photographs appear in *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 56; Norman Mlachak, “Just Like a War, Awed Policemen and Firemen Say.”

⁵² Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of Selected Neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio: April 1965*, Series P-23, no. 21, Table 12. Another indication of the severity of the poverty endemic in Hough is revealed in comments made by a group of four women from Africa, two each from Madagascar and Senegal, who toured Cleveland during July, 1966 under the auspices of a State Department program. Despite their understanding that “poverty exists all over the world,” the women—who visited Hough just days before the uprising kicked off—were, “appalled and confused by the poverty they saw [there],” according to the interpreter who traveled with them. See, “Hough Visit Appalls Visitors From Africa,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 18, 1966, 26.

night of unrest. “The looters,” Craggett noted, “included people of every age and size, small boys and girls, teen-agers, and adult men and women.” The primary objects of their attention—food, clothing, and furniture—reflected the extent of unmet basic needs among Hough residents. Moreover, rather than grabbing whatever was at hand, Craggett described watching a far more deliberate, even cooperative, process unfold: “Looted clothing was carefully sorted for color and size. Only that merchandise which seemed to fill a particular need … was finally carried away.” In another instance, Craggett reported, “some looters even stopped to try on clothing before moving on.” In addition to clothing, Craggett observed several groups hauling items away from stores that sold furniture. “The Unclaimed Freight Store … was emptied of furniture, floor coverings, lamps, [and] tables,” according to Craggett, while, “lamps, chairs, [and] tables,” were taken from another location. The link between looting and the deep poverty in Hough is most clearly revealed in Craggett’s description of several food stores that were, like the clothing establishments, cleaned out systematically. “As one car was loaded up and moved away, another would arrive o[n] the scene to be loaded.” This process, Craggett noted, “continued almost without interruption, for hours.” In one case indicative of a particularly desperate situation, Craggett reported watching a woman exit Larry’s Meat Market and take off “running down Hough [Ave.] with an armload of weiners [*sic*].”⁵³

While poverty statistics help to contextualize acts of looting within a broader framework of abiding privation, the relationships between residents and merchants in Hough also proved pivotal—especially in determining which stores were not only looted,

⁵³ Daisy Craggett, “I Ran Scared With Hough Area Looters,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 23, 1966, 1, 2A.

but set ablaze after all the useful items had been removed. Singling out two grocery stores on Hough Avenue, one at E. 79th and the other at E. 81st, Dennis Hillary explained the routine exploitation of Hough residents by merchants who owned businesses in Hough. Prices for goods in both stores, Hillary noted, were as “high as you can get.” As merchants understood, many among the large number of low-income residents of Hough had limited means of transportation, and for that reason were, essentially, a captive market. Unable to get to “better stores” in other parts of the city, Hillary explained, most Hough residents “ha[d] to buy from these stores around here, next door to their homes.”⁵⁴ Such circumstances left low-income residents of Hough vulnerable to the price manipulation of store owners who raised and lowered prices to correspond with welfare and food stamp disbursements. This pattern of fixing prices was so common that the tenth day of each month, when Aid to Needy Families with Children (known as ADC in Cleveland) checks were distributed, was known to merchants as Mothers’ Day.⁵⁵ The higher prices merchants charged when the checks came out frequently meant that a monthly allotment of food stamps ran out within weeks.⁵⁶ Alice Aarons, an unmarried, thirty-four-year-old mother of three, testified before the United States Commission on Civil Rights that her \$82 worth of food stamps ran out in “two or three weeks[,]”

⁵⁴ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 34-35.

⁵⁵ *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 34 253.

⁵⁶ Another aggravating factor was the determination by the state of Ohio to make payments that were less than the monthly allotment of aid that the state had calculated as the minimum necessary to meet the basic needs of families on welfare. Worse, the minimum standard used in 1966 had been calculated in 1959, and thus did not account for price inflation during the intervening years. Consequently, in Cleveland in 1966, monthly ADC payments of \$170.00 for a family of four represented only 76 percent of the \$224.00 determined by the state as necessary to meet the minimum standard. A full explanation of these issues is provided in testimony offered by the Director of the Ohio Department of Public Welfare and others, as well as a staff report on welfare in Cleveland in *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 237-297, 740-749.

depending on how food costs.”⁵⁷ She was not alone. In fact, Aarons was one among a panel of five mothers who received welfare to testify before the Commission. Of the other four women, none could report that their food stamp allotments lasted through the month, and most had trouble stretching them beyond two weeks.⁵⁸ As food stamps and cash ran out in Hough, area merchants dropped their prices back to their regular, higher-than-average level, and extended credit to customers who were then charged interest on the amount loaned, driving the actual cost of their purchases back up. Admitting that “you usually borrow,” the mothers who testified before the Civil Rights Commission nonetheless revealed a number of alternative strategies to get through the final week or weeks without food stamps without going into debt to storeowners. Cutting back meals to “old basics like potatoes or … biscuits and grits,” was one approach, said Alice Aarons. “In some cases,” according to Carole King, “mothers … have to sneak and do day work,” in order to raise money for food. Evaline McCreary was usually able to get “a couple of dollars” from her boyfriend. Ethel Thomas did her best to plan ahead: “usually on the 10th I buy a large bag of potatoes and a large box of rice because I know the food stamps are going to run out and so I usually have this on hand toward the end of the month.”⁵⁹

Not only did merchants in Hough charge more for goods, the quality of the produce was judged by Hough residents as inferior. “To buy meat,” said Dennis Hillairy, “you pay for Grade A, [but] you are really getting Grade F. And you’re paying more for

⁵⁷ *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 240.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 239-254.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 240-244.

Grade F than you ordinarily would be [paying] for Grade A.”⁶⁰ Carole King, a member of the Welfare Grievance Committee, a grassroots organization of welfare recipients in Cleveland established by and made up predominantly of black women on the East side, described the food for sale in white-owned Hough grocery stores as “trash from the Heights,” suggesting that produce no longer salable to affluent customers in nearby suburbs like Shaker Heights was trucked into Cleveland’s black neighborhoods, rather than thrown out, in an effort to leverage the captive market to extract maximum profit. “How,” asked Mrs. King rhetorically, “do you get to the Height[s] to shop?”⁶¹ Lewis G. Robinson recalled standing on the edge of a “crowd of about fifty brothers,” with Harllel Jones, Albert Ware-Bey, and Phil Morris at E. 86th Street and Hough Avenue on the first night of uprising. There, Robinson reports in his autobiography, he and the other supervisors of the JFK House listened to a member of the crowd inveigh against the low quality of produce for sale by white merchants in Hough:

This paleface come in our neighborhood and take our money to the Heights. He don’t leave a damn thing here. He’ll hire me or you for fifty dollars a week to sweep, mop, wash windows, and sprinkle that shit on his stale meat on Monday morning to make it look fresh—meat he bought from his brother in the Heights at a cheap price ‘cause his people out there refused to buy that shit—and sell it to us at higher prices than he charge his own people. Then tell us “here is our fresh, clean, best cuts of chops and choice cuts of beef.” I tell you brothers, we’ve got to make this beast pay for his misdeeds. We’ve got to make him pay! and pay! and pay! you hear[?]!⁶²

Confronting similar circumstances, Daisy Craggett noted that she, “had to go into a number of stores and complain about what was sold.” In addition to the poor quality of

⁶⁰ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 34.

⁶¹ Carole King, interview by John Britton, transcript of a tape recording, Cleveland, Ohio, November 17, 1967, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., 10. This interview, along with several others cited in this study were conducted under the auspices of The Civil Rights Documentation Project, and collectively form the Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection housed at the MSRC.

⁶² Robinson, *The Making of a Man*, 159.

the produce, Craggett also confronted duplicitous store owners who would, “package food at one weight and advertise it at another,” a scam that caused unwitting customers, “to pay for the shortages of weight.”⁶³ Another grocery store located near the border between Hough and Glenville drew the ire of local patrons for routinely failing to put prices on the items they sold. “You can tell they overcharge. They’ve done this for a long time,” said a Glenville youth who had heard the store was identified as a potential target for looting.⁶⁴ Such deceptions, manipulations, and abuses shaped the relationships between Hough residents and the business owners who preyed on them. When the rebellion came, store owners with reputations for overcharging, selling low-quality merchandise, or other dishonest and exploitative practices frequently found that their businesses were targets for firebombs. A young man from Hough who admitted to firebombing a drug store with a molotov cocktail explained his straightforward method for selecting his mark to a reporter: “White man own the place. Prices too high. Like to see it burn.”⁶⁵ Conversely, at least one white-owned business with a reputation for fair dealing and respectful treatment of its black customers survived unscathed even as the stores on either side were reduced to “ruins.” Indeed, the wife of the white couple that owned the establishment was regarded, at least by some in the black community, as a “soul sister.”⁶⁶

⁶³ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 86.

⁶⁴ Judy Prusnek, “Glenville Residents Ponder Riot Causes and Cures,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 22, 1966, C3.

⁶⁵ Pat Royse, “Niles Hurled Fire Bomb, Tells Why, *The Cleveland Press*, July 23, 1966, 1.

⁶⁶ Doris O’Donnell, “Rioters Follow Pattern: Burn, Run,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 1, 8.

As Tuesday afternoon wound on and the prospect of renewed unrest after nightfall drew closer, the most pressing question became whether or not Mayor Locher should request troops from the Ohio National Guard or leave the CPD in charge of restoring order. Upon leaving his emergency meeting with Chief Wagner and Safety Director McCormick assured of the ability of the CPD to handle the situation, Locher found John Kellogg, the black Republican city councilor who represented the 18th ward in Cleveland's Central Area, waiting to talk to him. Declaring that "this is the time for bold action," Kellogg warned Locher that the destruction that laid waste to large sections of Hough Avenue could easily spread to larger shopping centers on nearby Euclid and Carnegie Avenues, essentially the border between the Hough and Central areas, and urged the Mayor to "call [National Guard troops] before nightfall."⁶⁷ Kellogg was apparently quite persuasive in his brief meeting with the Mayor who was likewise prevailed upon by Kellogg's peers in the City Council, M. Morris Jackson and George Forbes.⁶⁸

With pressure to call the Guard mounting, Locher shifted course. Just before 3:00 p.m. the the Mayor instructed his Deputy Chief Counsel from the Law Departmet, Daniel O'Loughlin, to phone Brigadier General Herbert Minton of the Ohio National Guard to request that Minton assemble "a sizable force ... at an armory near Cleveland for quick commitment if needed." Minton assured O'Loughlin that he appreciated the administration's concern, but offered no action beyond sending National Guard observers to Cleveland that night as had been previously arranged between the Guard and Chief

⁶⁷ "Pressure to Call Guard Was Heavy," 8.

⁶⁸ Bob Williams, "Hough Explodes Into Violence; Man, 36, Mother of 3 Are Shot Dead," *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 23, 1966, 1. See also, Walter Rugaber, "Negro Killed in Cleveland; Guard Called in New Riots," *New York Times*, July 20, 1966, 1, 24.

Wagner. Unsatisfied, Locher called Minton back himself ten minutes later and, “strongly urged that [Minton] have a sizable force at [the] nearby armory.” Minton agreed to study the request. Thirty minutes later, he was on the phone with John McElroy, an assistant to Governor James Rhodes, repeating Locher’s request to assemble troops and adding his own recommendation that a squadron of the 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment “be alerted and stand by in their armories.” Taking the request and recommendation under advisement, McElroy signed off to confer with Rhodes. In the meantime, the outlook of the CPD had begun to change, falling in line with Locher’s request for troops. Contacted by a representative of the National Guard to ascertain their opinion, Chief Wagner’s second in command confirmed the department’s desire to “have the Guard on a standby basis.” With a consensus forged among officials in Cleveland, the Guard awaited official orders from the Governor who was then on the phone with Locher “discussing the problem.” Finally, at 4:30 p.m. John McElroy called Brigadier General Minton, and, “ordered him to mobilize elements of the National Guard to assist in controlling the civil disturbances in Cleveland.” Within hours, one thousand Guard troops were on their way to Cleveland.⁶⁹

While Locher may have found John Kellogg’s argument about protecting property from destruction especially compelling, the Councilman had additional concerns motivating him to get the Mayor to act. Undoubtedly aware of the violent conduct of CPD officers the night before, Kellogg’s interest in bringing the National Guard to

⁶⁹ “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard During the Hough Area Riots in Cleveland, 18-31 July, 1966,” 3-5. This report is available in the library at the Western Reserve Historical Society, and will hereafter be cited as, “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard.” See also, Robert P. Daniels, “Ohio Guard Moves Into Hough,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 1, 8; Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, “Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, 1, A4.

Cleveland was twofold: “We want to protect life,” Kellogg said, “and property.”⁷⁰ Given the stated intention of Safety Director McCormick to have the CPD “meet force with force,” Kellogg had clear cause for concern. Whatever relief he and other black leaders might have felt when Locher called for the National Guard must have been tempered by Locher’s insistence that, despite shifting strategy, his interpretation of the situation had not changed. “Our job is to end lawlessness in Cleveland,” the Mayor declared. Moreover, Locher expressed his preference that the CPD retain primacy in its working relationship with the National Guard. “We are going to restore order first and maintain it with our Police Department,” he said. The CPD would be “backed by the National Guard.” As a final measure of preparation the Mayor ordered, “all bars, taverns and cafes in the Hough area to close for the night.”⁷¹

With the official plan in place by Tuesday evening, the city braced for nightfall. Anyone wondering about the renewal of upheaval did not have to wait even that long. By 7:25 p.m. three fires were already burning at Hough Avenue and Crawford Road, the intersection where the largest blazes and the greatest destruction had taken place on Monday night. At about the same time, the Seventy-Niners Cafe was firebombed. With the flames of rebellion thus rekindled, unrest began to spread for a second night. A large group gathered near E. 78th and Lexington where a SaveMor market was burning. Police on the scene called for back up to disperse the crowd and a fire battalion to extinguish the blaze. By 8:00 p.m. the several hundred people who had gathered in the area around E. 79th and Hough rained down rocks and bottles on the Seventy-Niners Cafe after firemen

⁷⁰ “Pressure to Call Guard Was Heavy,” 8.

⁷¹ Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, “Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls,” 1.

extinguished the small fire ignited there by the firebomb.⁷²

Not only would the destruction and looting on the second night surpass the intensity of the first, despite the arrival of National Guard troops on the streets of Hough about an hour before midnight, but events on Tuesday would also prove to be as deadly as the previous night. Not long after the fire at the Seventy-Niners was put out, police engaged a group of black people on the north side of Hough Avenue near E. 89th Street. The police moved to detain members of the crowd including several adults and a young boy. Accounts of what happened next differ; the only certainly was the ultimate result: Percy Giles, a thirty-six-year-old black man who was in the neighborhood to help a friend board up his restaurant, lay unresponsive on the sidewalk several feet from the intersection of Hough Avenue and E. 86th Street. He had been shot in the back of the head. “Found” on the sidewalk by police at 8:50 p.m., Giles was pronounced dead at Mount Sinai hospital at 8:55 p.m.. Reports by the daily newspapers insinuated that Giles, like Joyce Arnett the night before, was an unfortunate victim caught in the crossfire of a gun battle between the police and snipers hidden on a nearby rooftop. According to police accounts, officers in the area came under fire from snipers stationed on the roof of a building on the south side of Hough Avenue “shortly before 9 p.m.,” after the arrests were made. The officers then opened fire with, “pistols, shotguns, and tear gas.” While press accounts alleged that sniper fire was, “witnessed by reporters,” they simultaneously claimed, rather incongruously, that the, “circumstances of the shooting [that killed Giles]

⁷² Robert P. Daniels, “Ohio Guard Moves Into Hough,” 8.

were not known.”⁷³

As with the killing of Joyce Arnett, the material facts of Giles’s death cast serious doubt on the police version of events, demonstrating instead a lack of training and professionalism among CPD officers who again displayed enthusiasm for using significant force in response to minor provocations. It is difficult, for example, to imagine how it would have been possible for snipers on the roof of a four-story building to shoot Giles in the back of the head while he was on the same side of the street that the snipers were reported to be firing from. Moreover, unlike Arnett, Percy Giles was shot before nightfall, in the middle of a crowd of people who were witness to what happened. One of the witnesses on the street offered his version of events in testimony before the Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on the Hough Disturbances. The man, identified in the transcript only by his last name, Lewis, had been at home on the evening of July 19th. He knew he needed some provisions and, “didn’t want to go outside after dark.” Noticing the time, Mr. Lewis, “decided to go to the store before the action started.” His trip took him to the corner of E. 86th Street and Hough Avenue, where he arrived as the police were placing members of the crowd under arrest:

I walked down to 86th and Hough and at the same time on the corner of 86th, I saw the crowd mingling around and so as I looked around to find out what the crowd was doing, I saw the police had already put someone into the patrol wagon[,] and at the same time they were in preparation of putting another lady into the patrol wagon and before this they took the purse from her, they snatched the purse and searched it and after this they put her in.⁷⁴

⁷³ Robert P. Daniels, “Ohio Guard Moves Into Hough,” 8; Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, “Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls,” A4. Walter Rugaber, “Negro Killed in Cleveland; Guard Called in New Riots,” 1. Giles worked as a seaman on vessels plying the waters of the Great Lakes during the summer months, and had just returned home from a lake voyage several days before he was killed. Some additional detail about Giles is provided in, Michael D. Roberts, “Hough: Death and Devastation and the Smell of Spoiling Fish,” 1, 10; “Man Killed by Riot Bullet Was on Way to Aid a Friend,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, A11.

⁷⁴ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 108.

While some of the bystanders moved on, others who took exception to the arrests made their displeasure with the police known, raining projectiles down on the departing police cars. According to Lewis, it was in response to that barrage, rather than sniper fire, that police drew their firearms:

... The patrol car pulled off and the crowd was beginning to diminish[,] and then the policemen who were standing around and also some of the plain clothesmen [*sic*], those who were not in uniform, got into the station wagon and started to pull off[,] and all of a sudden bottles started flying[,] and after the bottles hit the ground and the car, the policemen jumped out and started firing in the air....⁷⁵

According to Lewis, the increasingly chaotic situation was further confused by police officers who gave conflicting orders to the crowd. The officers, Lewis testified, “told everyone to stop right there[,] and then they told them to disburse.” As some of the crowd began to flee, the police resumed shooting:

One policeman was taking a dead aim with a shotgun ... but [another] police I saw ... had the revolver pointed in an aim position[—]in my direction[,] actually[,] because the people were moving toward 86th. At the same time, I saw his hand just shake at that point and seen the smoke from the gun[,] and this fellow who dropped next to me hit the ground. At first I thought he was ducking because the bullets were flying[,] but ... I looked down at the ground and saw him bleeding from the head and he had been shot.⁷⁶

Asked about the newspaper accounts of sniper activity, Lewis was incredulous, telling the committee, “I doubt that very seriously. ... I witnessed the shooting and it wasn’t a sniper.” “[T]he papers,” Lewis added, “have a knack of sort of covering things up to make things sound as though it was someone else’s fault[,] and they indicated a sniper so [as] to take the thing away from the policeman.” His observations from a vantage point three feet away from Percy Giles when he was shot, Lewis said, “left me with the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 108-109.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 109.

impression that this was just cold blooded murder.”⁷⁷

Mr. Lewis’s testimony brought out another troubling aspect of police conduct at the time Percy Giles was killed. Asked by a member of the panel running the hearings whether he had been able to identify the officer with the revolver who Mr. Lewis accused of shooting Percy Giles, Lewis testified that he was unable to see the badge of the officer in question. While distance was a factor, Lewis suggested that the officer’s badge was also obscured by a leather coat. “Some of the police officers,” Lewis noted, “had their badges covered[,] and maybe this was the purpose so that they couldn’t be identified.”⁷⁸ Were this the only indication that police on patrol during the uprising concealed their badges, it would be easier to dismiss as an unfortunate episode of unprofessionalism, rather than an indication of something more sinister, as Mr. Lewis’s comment suggests. However, Bertha Pollard, called to testify about the police raid on the apartment building at 7310 Hough Avenue on the first night, was explicit on this point: “the police didn’t have a badge on them,” she insisted.⁷⁹ Likewise, Harllel Jones observed a number of irregularities in the conduct of police during the uprising, including police operating without badges. “No police wore badges,” he told the Cleveland Citizens’ Committee. Jones reported asking a black police officer why so many CPD officers were without their badges. According to Jones, the officer explained to him that, “when a riot occurs, you know people get funny and they grab you and they will grab that badge and it will tear shirts.” Patrolmen had to purchase their own uniforms, the officer told Jones, and,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 110.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 30.

not wanting to incur the potential cost of replacing a torn shirt, they took their badges off.⁸⁰

Another complicating factor in identifying the police was the presence of roughly 150 “special policemen” who patrolled Hough along with CPD officers.⁸¹ While they were officially acknowledged, the provenance and purpose of the special policemen was never clearly explained, although the group could have included a number of private security guards hired by business owners to dissuade looting and vandalism at their stores. For his part, Harllel Jones testified to the presence of “a lot of white fellows in the area that wore hunter’s jackets with little pockets … with shotgun shells in it. They had all … different kinds of weapons. Army type M14s. They were driving in regular cars but they were working right with the police.”⁸² Working with the police included, in at least one instance, stopping and searching vehicles and detaining the occupants. David Haywood watched several “private policemen” who were, “dressed in civilian clothes with riot helmets on and [armed with] riot shotguns,” direct traffic at the 79th Street and Hough Avenue intersection. These private police, Haywood said, stopped a two-tone Oldsmobile driven by “two young fellas.” One of the private police, “went all through the car,” while the other, “put these boys up against this barber shop on 79th,” and held them at gunpoint, according to Haywood. The private police then, “called the wagon,” and sent the Oldsmobile driver and his passenger to jail, despite the fact that, as far as Haywood

⁸⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁸¹ Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, “Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls,” A4.

⁸² *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 105-106.

could see, “they wasn’t doing anything then.”⁸³ Whether these and other civilian police were officially deputized or were, instead, operating essentially as a vigilante force with the consent of the CPD is difficult to ascertain from evidence available in the historical record.

In any case, the presence of the special policemen further blurred the line between officers of the law engaged in the course of their sworn duty to protect public safety, and a mob of heavily armed white men who, whatever their day jobs, regarded the forceful suppression of black dissent as a matter of personal interest. Indeed, the line between professional responsibility and private desire had already been significantly obfuscated by the actions of CPD officers who transformed themselves into so many anonymous white men with guns with the removal of their badges. In thus occupying the liminal space between their professional and personal selves, CPD officers were following the lead of their Chief, whose choice to carry his personal hunting rifle instead of a department-issued weapon while working in Hough exemplified his inability to understand his relationship to the uprising in light of the professional obligations of his job. That the weapon was not only his personal rifle, but a *hunting* rifle, further indicates Chief Wagner’s conception of his relationship to the black people living in Hough. Wagner was not alone in confusing the law enforcement responsibilities of his police force during the uprising with a hunting expedition. In addition to the chief, and the special policemen in their hunting jackets, CPD Sargent Ralph Lemieux was asked during an interview with a newspaper reporter about the several shotgun shells he was

⁸³ Ibid., 115-116.

holding. “They’re for hunting,” he told the reporter.⁸⁴ Considered within the context of repeated allusions to hunting, the killings of Joyce Arnett and Percy Giles at the hands of the police take on an especially sinister air, particularly given that both were felled by head shots, as would Wallace Kelly have been had he not survived his injuries.

Unlike the rest of his colleagues/hunting party, Sargent Lemieux stalked his prey from above. Having repurposed the helicopter normally used to monitor traffic, the CPD dispatched Lemieux and a pilot to patrol the skies of Hough during the uprising. Describing his assignment rather evasively as, “helping out in any way I can,” Lemieux was ostensibly responsible for coordinating the deployment of ground forces as efficiently as possible in response to rapidly changing circumstances. However, there is evidence to suggest that, more than just an eye in the sky, Lemieux’s helicopter also served as a gunship with heavy armaments.⁸⁵ Lemieux had flown over the chaos around

⁸⁴ “Sleepless, He Keeps Eye on Rioting in Helicopter Duty Over Hough,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, A11. Further indications of how the police interpreted the uprising and their relationship to it can be gleaned from a number of comparisons police officers made. The uprising was “just like vietnam,” according to one police officer. For another, it more closely resembled “an old western where you’re caught in crossfire in a box canyon.” See, Hilbert Black, “Press Reporter Describes Tour Through Riot-Torn Area,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 19, 1966, A5; and Donald L. Bean, “‘Like Western’, Says Policeman,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 8. For his part, a fireman was “thinking of quitting,” after sustaining a barrage of bricks and bottles on the first night of the uprising. “We’re not hired to fight a guerrilla war, and that’s what this is,” he insisted. See, Norman Mlachak, “Just Like a War, Awed Policemen and Firemen Say.”

⁸⁵ “Sleepless, He Keeps Eye on Rioting in Helicopter Duty Over Hough”; Walter Rugaber, “Trouble Persists in Hough Section,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1966, 18. Though he declined to confirm the presence of a heavy weapon onboard to a reporter who specifically asked about one, subsequent details of Lemieux’s exploits lend some credence to the widely-shared suspicion that his helicopter was thus outfitted. For example, the CPD had asked for and received special permission from federal officials to ignore FAA regulations and fly the helicopter with its running lights off. Life magazine, which had chartered a small airplane in order to provide an aerial view of the uprising for its photographers, requested that Lemieux turn his lights on so that the magazine’s plane could more easily see, and avoid, the CPD chopper. Rather than do so, Lemieux told the chartered plane to, “stay the hell out of here.” Subsequently, when another helicopter got too close to the airspace above the unrest for Lemieux’s liking, he was authorized to “put a shot across their bow if necessary,” to get them out of there. To do so with any accuracy from a safe distance, Lemieux would almost certainly have needed a larger weapon than his shotgun. See, “Sleepless, He Keeps Eye on Rioting in Helicopter Duty Over Hough,”; “Police Coptor’s Lights Stay Off,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 26; and “N.Y. Car Yields Red Propaganda,” *Cleveland Press*, July 22, 1966, A4.

E. 73rd and Hough Avenue during the first night when Joyce Arnett was killed, and on Tuesday night he found himself hovering above the Astor Theater on Hough Avenue at E. 84th Street where police were engaged in another gun battle. Spotlights from the CPD helicopter canvassed the roof of the theater hoping to disclose the location of a suspected sniper to the approximately two dozen police, including several special policemen, in the street below who “opened up with a tremendous volley of shotgun fire.” Having fired an estimated fifty shots without success, the police determined to storm the theater. “They rushed through the open door and ran upstairs,” according to an embedded *Cleveland Press* reporter. Once upstairs, the police, “smashed down a door and fired several tear gas shells into a room where the sniper might have been hiding.” As was true of the police efforts to locate suspected snipers the previous night, the officers who stormed the Astor were unable to find a sniper in the theater.⁸⁶

Additional incidents of arson and looting continued into the night. However, just as John Kellogg had feared, because many of the potential targets closest to the center of the uprising had already been hit, and because the heaviest police presence remained in the center of Hough, the radius of the uprising began to widen, shading into other neighborhoods in Cleveland’s black ghetto. At approximately 10:30 p.m., a grocery store on Euclid Avenue (the boundary between Hough and Central) at E. 81st Street was looted. Mallory Richardson, a twenty-six year old black resident of Central who was

⁸⁶ Michael Prendergast, “Reporter Ducks as Sniper Fires From Roof of Theater,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, 1, A11; Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, “Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls”; Robert P. Daniels, “Ohio Guard Moves Into Hough,” 8. The only evidence to support CPD claims of sniper activity in Hough on the second night was the reported arrest of a 47-year-old black man by police in an alley near the intersection of E. 55th Street and Euclid Avenue—the periphery of the Hough neighborhood. Police reported observing the man drive his car into the alley, whereupon they conducted a search of the vehicle and found “a rifle, a box of ammunition, and a pair of binoculars.” See, Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, “Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls,” A4.

walking on Euclid Avenue near the store when the police arrived, became the second gunshot victim of the night. According to Richardson, “I felt this hot flash in my leg and fell to the sidewalk. A policeman walked over to me and cursed: ‘you are lucky I didn’t shoot you in your [expletive deleted] head.’”⁸⁷ In addition to the spread of looting, the largest fire of the second night gutted an abandoned five-story apartment building with seventy units located on Hough Avenue one block away from its terminus at E.55th Street, the western boundary of Hough. Despite their aggressive show of force, the CPD response had been no more effective at stopping or even containing the uprising during the second night than it had been on the first. On the contrary, observers from the National Guard who arrived in Hough ahead of the troops on Tuesday night, reported that, “the situation was generally deteriorating.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Bob Williams and Daisy Craggett, “Wounded Citizens Cry Out, ... Were Police the Snipers?,” 2A. Because the quote was printed in the newspaper, the specific language used by the police officer was redacted in the article. It takes little imagination, however, to fill in the blank with likely candidates. Another man was also injured in the fracas. Paul Richardson, reportedly not related to Mallory, became the third person wounded by gunfire that night when he was shot in the left arm on E.79th Street around the corner from where Mallory Richardson was shot. A resident of a nearby apartment building on Euclid Avenue between E. 79th Street and E. 81st Street, Peggy Beaver, was charged on Thursday with the shooting. According to an account police provided to the press, Beaver “fired a shot out her apartment window and wounded [Paul] Richardson ... in the parking lot next to the building.” See, “E. Side Woman Charged in Hough Riot Shooting,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966.

⁸⁸ “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard,” 7.

CHAPTER 4

BRICKS: REBELLION, COMMUNITY CONTROL, AND BLACK POWER, PART II

By 11:15 p.m. on Tuesday, July 19th, the first of the National Guard troops from the 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment arrived in Cleveland. Taken first to the 5th District police station, the troops were quickly rerouted to the CPD mobile command post at E. 79th and Hough Avenue to receive their assignments—"foot patrol, roving mounted patrol, protection for firemen, and the control of critical intersections"—and join the city and special policemen who were already deployed. Transportation delays and similar logistical snags staggered the arrival of National Guard troops, though the force reached a substantial size during the predawn hours, with 725 guardsmen "committed to action" by 3:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 20.¹

Even so, a comparison of the quantifiable data which has been used as the standard measure of the severity of episodes of civil disorder indicates that the second night of the uprising in Hough was worse than the first. At least as many people were injured on the second night as the twenty-one who suffered injuries the night before. However, the seventy-seven arrests on the second night exceeded those on the first by two dozen. As was true the first night, the vast majority of the arrests were made on charges of looting and disorderly conduct, and a significant number of those arrested, twenty-seven on the second night, were juveniles. Fires, too, were more numerous on the second night, with thirty-eight actual blazes (among sixty-seven fire alarms called)

¹ "Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard During the Hough Area Riots in Cleveland, 18-31 July, 1966," 8. Western Reserve Historical Society.

accounting for a three-fold increase over Monday night.² Moreover, evidence that the uprising was spreading into areas farther away from its point of origin on Hough Avenue where the CPD maintained its mobile command post became apparent by the end of the night. Given these results, it seems clear that Chief Wagner's confidence in his department's ability to handle the situation effectively without help from the National Guard was entirely misplaced, while John Kellogg and other black leaders who prevailed upon Locher to call in the Guard had every reason to be concerned. Indeed, by 9:30 p.m. Governor Rhodes approved the request of an additional 500 men to compliment his initial order of 1000 Guard troops to Cleveland. Two hours later, he authorized the mobilization of another two hundred bringing the total authorized troop strength to 1700 guardsmen.³

The arrival of the National Guard and their engagement in support of the CPD for the duration of the week allows a comparison between the performance of the guardsmen and the police officers they worked alongside. The contrast that emerges brings the lack of professionalism displayed by the CPD during the first two nights of the uprising into sharp relief, and reinforces the clear impression that violent aggression and open hostility directed against the back community at large was standard operating procedure. The difference in conduct between the two forces can at least partly be measured in bullets and tear gas canisters. Although the precise number of rounds fired by either CPD officers or National Guard troops is unrecorded, the man in charge of the CPD Arms

² Hilbert Black and Wally Guenther, "Locher, Guard Plan Riot Area Controls"; Robert P. Daniels, "Ohio Guard Moves Into Hough"; "Hough's 2d Night: 38 Fires, 53 Alarms"; "Police Arrest 60 as Violence Explodes Again in Hough." The discrepancy between the numbers reported by the *Plain Dealer* in the last two articles cited here results from that paper going to press while the unrest was still ongoing. The higher numbers used above come from the *Cleveland Press*, which, as an afternoon paper, had more time to get final tallies from the authorities prior to printing the paper.

³ "Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard," 5-7.

Unit, Lieutenant Michael Roth, admitted dispensing, “1300 rounds of pistol, rifle, shotgun and tear gas gun ammunition,” in just the first two nights of the unrest during the vast majority of which the CPD operated alone.⁴ As the foregoing account of those two nights makes clear, CPD officers were hardly sparing in their use of the ammo they received. For their part, the National Guard was even more heavily armed. Every guardsman with an M-1 rifle carried a minimum of sixteen rounds, while each mounted thirty-caliber machine gun was provided a minimum of 250 rounds. Superior firepower notwithstanding, the National Guard’s final report on their involvement in Hough notes that, “there were only a very few instances where guardsmen fired their weapons and very few rounds of ammunition were actually fired.”⁵ The press reported two such instances, one on Tuesday, the first night the Guard arrived in Cleveland, and another later in the week. Both rounds were discharged accidentally, the first in the National Guard barracks as a guardsman was loading his weapon, the second when a guardsman, “slipped on basement steps,” while assisting CPD officers executing warranted searches of three houses suspected of storing looted merchandise. Apart from two additional, accidental discharges of tear gas grenades, “it was not necessary for guardsmen to use any of their tear gas,” according to the Guard’s report.⁶

The National Guard troops in Cleveland were restrained by explicit orders from the commanding officer of the Ohio National Guard, Major General Erwin C. Hostetler,

⁴ “Young Guardsman Wounded by Own Bayonet,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, A4.

⁵ “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard,” C-7.

⁶ Young Guardsman Wounded by Own Bayonet”; “N.Y. Car Yields Red Propaganda”; “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard,” C-7. No arrests were made during the searches, suggesting that the houses in question did not contain stolen items.

who oversaw the deployment in Hough, not to fire their weapons unless fired upon first.⁷ Given that the large number of rounds fired by CPD officers during the first two nights of the uprising was justified by claims that the officers had been fired upon by snipers and were returning fire, the wide discrepancy between the number of rounds fired by CPD officers and National Guard troops presents two possible conclusions: either the CPD exaggerated (or invented) the incidents of sniper fire during the first two days—making the level of force with which they engaged the black community in Hough undeniably excessive—or else such incidents dropped off precipitously as soon as the National Guard arrived on the scene. While the historical record is absent of evidence that would support the latter conclusion, the police misconduct detail thus far lends substantial credence to the former, further reinforcing the impression that the CPD approached its task in Hough less as a matter of law enforcement and more as an occasion to visit selective violence upon the black community at will, an opportunity, in other words, to go hunting.

That was certainly the impression of Lewis Robinson who asserted that some CPD officers used the arrival of National Guard reinforcements in Hough late on Tuesday night as an opportunity to engage in extracurricular pursuits in other black neighborhoods on the east side. “[A]s soon as the National Guard came in at 11:20 [p.m.] … some of the policemen came over to the Wade Park and Superior Area … and just went nigger hunting,” Robinson told the Citizens’ Committee. After recounting several incidents he witnessed, Robinson went on to tell the Committee about his own brush with the CPD

⁷ “Guard Won’t Fire First, Says General,” *The Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, A16.

that night. He had been driving around Hough picking up kids from the JFK House to get them off the streets, and was returning with several boys in the car. While they waited at a stoplight at E. 86th Street on Superior Avenue, Robinson testified:

a carload of four policemen came there . . . in a green Plymouth, unmarked with no license number on the back, just [said] police on the front fender. They stopped us and told us to get out of the car, bringing shotguns and pistols, stuck them right in the window of our car and told us to get out. I asked [an officer], “What’s going on? The riot is on Hough [Avenue].” He said, “get out of the damn car.” We got out of the car and they stood us up against the building.

One officer hit Robinson in the face with his billy club, shattering his eye glasses, and then smashed one of the kids in the mouth, while two other officers contemplated what they should do next. According to Robinson, “one said to the other, ‘should we shoot them all here?’ The other one said, ‘no, just shoot Robinson and one of the other kids and let the other three go.’” Apparently, the cops in question preferred to terrify rather than kill Robinson and the boys, and no further violence was done.⁸

An opportunity to directly compare the conduct of the CPD and the National Guard in the performance of their duty came at the end of the third night of unrest. The respective decisions made and actions taken by guardsmen and CPD officers who encountered a family attempting to flee their home across the street from the largest fire of the uprising provide perhaps the most damning evidence of murderous intent among CPD officers whose official responsibility was the protection of life and property.

With the full compliment of National Guard troops in Cleveland by nightfall on Wednesday, the authorities determined to use the augmented strength to prevent the recurrence of unrest in Hough for a third night. Focusing especially on Hough Avenue,

⁸ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 135-137.

contingents of “at least three guardsmen were stationed at each intersection,” of the street running from the western boundary of Hough at E. 55th Street to the eastern boundary at E. 105th Street. National Guard vehicles, including jeeps with mounted machine guns, were deployed at every other intersection. The heavy National Guard presence appeared to have its intended effect, with City Councilor M. Morris Jackson, whose ward included part of Hough, noting that, “these guardsmen are not getting the back talk police get.”⁹ However, the heavy concentration of resources on Hough Avenue, while deterring the renewal of unrest in the area, could not prevent the spread of the uprising into the adjacent neighborhoods of Glenville, to the North, and Central, to the South. Altogether ninety-one fire alarms were called, of which seventy-six were actual fires. Among the targets hit by firebombs were grocery stores, drug stores, and hardware stores, effectively continuing the pattern established during the previous two nights in Hough. More than venting outrage over the economic exploitation carried out by local businesses, though, the selection of one target especially, suggests a conscious effort among some in the black community to connect the expanding uprising with the grassroots political struggles of several years earlier. An estimated crowd of five hundred people—the largest reported throughout the uprising—gathered at the Stephen E. Howell Elementary School in Glenville, site of the civil rights demonstration in 1964 during which the Reverend Bruce Klunder was killed protesting the construction of the school on the grounds that it was being built to maintain segregation in Cleveland’s public education system. The school, built despite the protests, stood as a monument to the disregard city authorities

⁹ “Guard Brings Relative Order to Smoldering Hough,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 21, 1966, 10.

maintained toward both the concerns raised and the solutions proposed by the black community to eliminate the discriminatory practices that limited the education of their children. Unable to prevent the school's construction, some, now seeking its destruction, attacked it with firebombs.¹⁰

Firebomb attacks continued into the night, mounting in number and stretching the limits of the Fire Department's resources to respond in the hour prior to midnight. At one point around 11:00 p.m., with all of the fire units deployed on previous alarms, there were no firefighters available to respond to a fire at E. 73rd Street and Chester Avenue. Despite the hectic pace, the CPD and National Guard seemed to have regained control of the situation by midnight. Headed to the presses soon thereafter, the Thursday edition of the *Plain Dealer* expressed enthusiasm about the apparently improving situation, declaring in a front-page banner headline: "GUARD BRINGS ORDER TO HOUGH." The optimism would prove premature, however.

The largest fire of the third night was also the last, roaring to life at the approach of dawn on Thursday. Firebombs ignited a five-alarm blaze that raged for eight hours and caused \$100,000 worth of damage to the University Party Center, a roller-skating rink and dance hall on Cedar Avenue south of Hough at the eastern end of the Central Area. Nearly one hundred firemen flooded the area with CPD officers and National Guard troops. The ensuing commotion startled the Townes family awake in their home across the street from the fire. Concerned that the situation would only grow more dangerous, Henry and Diana Townes resolved to get their family out of harm's way. Diana called her

¹⁰ "Violence Spreads to New Areas," *The Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, 1, A4; "Guard Brings Order to Hough," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 21, 1966, 1, 10; "Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard," 10.

in-laws to alert them to the situation and make arrangements to stay at their house until the danger passed.¹¹

Just before 5:00 a.m. Henry and Diana Townes packed their seven-month-old son, Emanuel, and Diana's twelve-year-old brother, Ernest, along with the family's dog, into the back seat of Henry's 1957 Ford convertible. Henry and Diana climbed into the front seat with Henry's three-year-old nephew, Christopher, and headed for Henry's parents' home in East Cleveland. As he tried to exit his driveway, Henry Townes found his path blocked by a police vehicle. After asking a police officer repeatedly to move the car out of his driveway to no avail, Townes cut across his neighbor's lawn and pulled out onto Cedar Avenue.¹² He was stopped by a "colored officer" standing in the street who, "asked me what the hell I thought I was doing," Townes said in testimony before the Cleveland Citizens' Committee. "I said I was trying to get my wife and family the hell away from here before any stuff starts," he continued. Three white officers approached Townes's car and grabbed him, trying to pull him from the car. Growing frantic, Diana Townes wrapped her arms around her husband in an effort to keep him in the car, whereupon police officers reached through the passenger-side door, grabbed her by the hair, and tried to pull her away from Henry. "They were pulling on me to get me to turn my husband loose so they could beat on him or whatever they wanted to do to him," Diana Townes explained. Frustrated in their efforts to remove him from the car, Henry Townes testified, the police began, "beating me with a club." The officer holding him lost his grip on

¹¹ "5 Wounded in New Rioting; Violence Spreads to New Areas," *The Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, 1, A4; "James M. Naughton, "Uneasy Calm Shattered by Fire and Police Salvo," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 9. "Victims' Kin Denounces Riots," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 1, 9.

¹² Sam Giaimo, "Why Did They Shoot Us So Soon? Asks Youthful Rioting Victim," *Cleveland Press*, July 22, 1966, A4.

Townes who fell to the floor of the car. At that point, with his feet no longer on the pedals, “the car lunged forward,” Townes said.¹³ The CPD officers opened fire. At least twenty-one bullets tore into the car, flattening three tires, puncturing the gas tank and windshield, and injuring the occupants. None of the guardsmen on the scene pulled a trigger, though one, Captain James Pletcher, was hit in the leg by a ricocheting round, becoming the first guardsman wounded in action in Cleveland.¹⁴

The injuries sustained by members of the Townes family were far more severe. Henry Townes was shot in the hand, missed by the bullet that was fired through the windshield directly above the steering wheel, where his head would have been had he been driving the car as the police contended.¹⁵ Diana Townes was not as lucky. No fewer than ten bullet holes pockmarked her door on the passenger’s side, and she was shot in the head and right arm. Neither did the children escape injury. Three-year-old Christopher, who was sitting on the front seat, was also shot in the head and gravely wounded. In the back seat, Ernest was shot in the right leg, while seven-month-old

¹³ Both Henry and Diana Townes testified before the Citizens’ Committee. Diana’s testimony appears in *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 12-15. For Henry’s testimony see pages 16-18. Ernest Williams recounted a slightly different version of events, according to which five police officers tried to pull Henry out of the car. According to Williams, Henry Townes managed to get his door closed and began to drive forward when police began shooting. See, Sam Giaimo, “Why Did They Shoot Us So Soon? Asks Youthful Rioting Victim.”

¹⁴ “5 Wounded in New Rioting; Violence Spreads to New Areas,” A4; James M. Naughton, “Uneasy Calm Shattered by Fire and Police Salvo”; “Victims’ Kin Denounces Riots,” 9; Walter Rugaber, “Cleveland Police Wound Negro Mother, 3 Children,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1966, 1, 35. For his part, Henry Townes was adamant that none of the National Guard troops shot at his car. The National Guard’s final report explicitly states that “A colored male and his family in an automobile were fired upon by policemen.” See, “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard,” 9. All of the press accounts likewise agree, a rarity in the newspaper coverage of the uprising, that the shots were fired by CPD officers.

¹⁵ This point was raised by John Hughly, Henry Townes’s step-father, in his own testimony before the Citizens’ Committee. See, *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 87-88.

Emanuel, grazed by a bullet, bled from the neck. Miraculously, no one was killed.¹⁶

When the shooting stopped, Henry Townes looked up to find a scene of true horror: “blood was streaming down [Diana’s] face,” he recalled. “The baby was still[.] I thought he was dead.”¹⁷ Diana and Christopher were taken to Lakeside Hospital in critical condition where they remained for almost two weeks. Surgeons removed Diana’s right eye and put a steel plate in Christopher’s head. Both she and Christopher sustained brain damage. Diana remained unable to use her right arm a month after the incident. Emanuel and Ernest were treated for their injuries and released from the hospital.¹⁸ Henry Townes was placed under arrest and charged with aggravated assault by police who alleged that he attempted to run them down with his car, causing them to shoot at him. He was held and questioned by CPD detectives about the incident, during which time journalists were prevented from interviewing him. Townes was then bound over to the Cuyahoga County Grand Jury, which eventually cleared him of any responsibility for the shooting.¹⁹

Unlike the shootings of Joyce Arnett and Percy Giles, the CPD could not justify the shots they fired at the Townes family as a response to incoming sniper fire. Neither could they claim ignorance about or otherwise obfuscate the origin of the bullets fired.

¹⁶ Photographs of the aftermath show Diana Townes in the passenger seat with blood streaming down her face. The passenger-side door is open and ten bullet holes are easily observed. See, “Violence Leaves Its Mark in Fire, Bullets, Crash,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 52; “5 Wounded in New Rioting; Violence Spreads to New Areas,” A4; Walter Rugaber, “Cleveland Police Wound Negro Mother, 3 Children,” 35; Sam Giaimo, “Why Did They Shoot Us So Soon? Asks Youthful Rioting Victim.” See Figure D.5 in Appendix D.

¹⁷ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 18.

¹⁸ “Wife Loses Eye in Riot-Fire Police Shooting,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 6, 1966, 1; James M. Naughton, “Uneasy Calm Shattered by Fire and Police Salvo”; Ken Temple, “Start Benefit Fund For Townes Family,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 20, 1966, 1, 2A. “5 Wounded in New Rioting; Violence Spreads to New Areas,” A4.

¹⁹ Walter Rugaber, “Cleveland Police Wound Negro Mother, 3 Children,” 35; *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 18.

The fact that the National Guard troops who were also present at the time did not fire a shot clearly suggests that they did not feel themselves to be in imminent danger as Henry Townes attempted to drive his family away from the fire.²⁰ It is clear, therefore, that the CPD assault on the Townes family was another in a series of unprofessional and needlessly aggressive responses that escalated rather than diffused a fraught situation, and, in so doing, grievously injured innocent bystanders who, quite apart from participating in the unrest, were trying to extricate themselves from it.

The most disturbing aspect of the Townes family shooting, though, was the decision of CPD officers to fire repeatedly on Townes's car with the knowledge that young children were passengers. As Henry Townes's step-father, John Hughly, explained, "the police . . . knew that children were in the car. They had both doors open, they pulled on Diana, they were pulling on Hank; they would have had to see the three year old child . . . on the front seat of the automobile. They had to reach right over this little boy while pulling on Diana's hair." To Hughly, it was clear from this incident that, "the Cleveland police are using Gestapo tactics that are used in Russia," in dealing with the black community. Indeed it is difficult to accept the assault on the Townes family as anything other than further evidence of a pathological hostility toward black people that pervaded the culture of the police department and informed the violent actions and murderous

²⁰ The National Guard offered only qualified corroboration of the CPD contention that Townes threatened to run down CPD officers, in so far as it accepted the CPD version of events as true. For example, the Guard's final report states that "occupants of the car were injured by gun fire when the driver apparently attempted to run down police and guardsmen at the scene of a fire." See, "Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard," 9. Pletcher's comments to reporters also fell short of a wholehearted endorsement of the CPD story, with the Captain saying only that Townes's car "lunged forward" and headed in the direction of three policemen just before shots were fired. See, James M. Naughton, "Uneasy Calm Shattered by Fire and Police Salvo." Notably, Pletcher's account also corroborates Townes's contention that his car lunged forward, even though it avoids mention of the police assaulting Henry and Diana Townes that, according to Townes, caused him to lose control of the car.

intent of a significant number of officers on the force. Certain that, “the [Townes family’s] rights were violated,” by the Cleveland police, and convinced by weeks of inaction that he would get no satisfaction locally, John Hughly contacted federal authorities including the FBI, the federal District Attorney for northern Ohio, and U.S. Attorney General, Nicholas Katzenbach, seeking redress.²¹

In addition to the physical injuries and emotional trauma, the incident also caused significant financial hardship for the Townes family. The seventy dollars in wages Henry Townes earned each week were insufficient to cover the significant medical expenses incurred from the lengthy hospital stays and multiple surgeries required to treat the wounds caused by CPD bullets. In the only bright spot of this otherwise dark episode, the hardship brought the best out of the black community, which established a fund to help the Townes family pay their medical bills. The drive was initiated by longtime civil rights activist Ancusto Butler who, with Judy Myers and Marie Dickson, went door-to-door soliciting donations. Even with this show of community support, the severity of the trauma induced by the shooting led the Townes family to plan a relocation to California. “You would never have gotten me to leave Cleveland before this incident,” Diana Townes said, “but now I want to get away from here.”²²

Of course, violent attacks against black people carried out by white police officers or similar authorities were hardly unique to the Hough uprising. Such violence has been fundamental to the maintenance of white supremacy in the United States throughout its

²¹ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 87-88. Whether Hughly received help from any of the federal authorities he contacted is not ascertainable from the historical record.

²² Ken Temple, “Start Benefit Fund For Townes Family.”

history. And while such violence is primarily associated, especially in popular understanding, with the southern United States during and after slavery, the historical record clearly shows it to be an enduring national phenomenon, emerging with particular force in northern states when the black population increased in those areas, as it did during the Great Migration of the 1910s, and again with the second phase of that migration in the 1940s and 1950s. Although described as “race riots,” the violent episodes that flared up coincident with the arrival of large numbers of black people in areas of the country outside the South—in which roving bands of whites, joined or abetted by law enforcement officers, attacked black people and destroyed black property in a bid to impose supremacy and delineate the physical spaces, job categories, and overall social position to which black people would be restricted—can be more accurately characterized as pogroms. Violence was also the primary tool of white southerners, again including agents of law enforcement, attempting to reinforce the parameters of segregation as part of the campaign of “massive resistance” to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in the 1950s, as well as those endeavoring to maintain white political power in the face of increased efforts at black voter registration and independent black political organization during the 1960s. As the first instances of anti-black violence subject to video recording and rapid, widespread dissemination through television news broadcasts, images of southern racial violence during the 1960s that have since attained an iconic status worked to fix the problem in the minds of many northern whites as a uniquely southern concern. Many of these iconic moments happened in Alabama, including, especially, the 1963 fire-hose and police-dog attacks carried out by “Bull”

Connor's forces against the young ground troops of SCLC's children's crusade in Birmingham, the Klan bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham later the same year, and the Alabama state troopers' Flying V attack against civil rights marchers at the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma in 1965.²³ Mistaken impressions about regional specificity notwithstanding, racial violence of the sort directed and carried out under the aegis of law enforcement authorities in Alabama during the 1960s was also present in AlabamaNorth, even if the television cameras were not.²⁴

The anti-black violence enacted by police officers during the Hough uprising was also part of a long departmental history of discrimination against and abuse of black Clevelanders that stretched back decades. Among the litany of complaints raised repeatedly by members of the black community against the CPD and its officers were physical and verbal abuse; insufficient police protection and delayed police responses to calls for assistance in predominantly black neighborhoods; unwarranted arrests; detention of suspects without charge, sometimes for several days; and segregation of the few black CPD officers within the department. All of these problems were further exacerbated by the fact that complaints about police misconduct were investigated by members of the

²³ The state was, of course, also the location of the most serious attacks against the Freedom Riders in Anniston, Birmingham, and Montgomery in 1961, and home to countless lesser-known episodes in the notoriously violent "bloody" Lowndes county and other rural counties throughout the state.

²⁴ Perhaps the most egregious example of police brutality carried out against civil rights protesters in Cleveland came during a non-violent sit-in at the Board of Education offices on February 4, 1964 as part of the campaign to desegregate Cleveland's public schools (see Chapter 2). Given orders to clear the building of protesters, "stick wielding, cursing police officers," appeared eager to oblige. The treatment of the protesters left Harold Williams, then Executive Secretary of the Cleveland branch of the NAACP, who described himself as a "participant in the demonstration," unable to "believe that there was any reason for handling men and women who were engaged in the demonstration with the ruthlessness with which I saw them bounced down those steps from nearly three flights up." Two of the women sitting-in were hospitalized for injuries they suffered from being forcibly removed. See, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 569-570; Bob Williams and Ken Temple, "Cops Batter Negro Pickets: Two Demonstrators Hospitalized," *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 8, 1964.

department itself, which, as a rule, led to the exoneration of the officers charged. Indeed, during his five years as president of the Cleveland branch of the NAACP from 1960 through 1964, Clarence H. Holmes, an attorney by trade, recalled in testimony before the Commission on Civil Rights that, “there was not a single incident which was called to the attention of the police, where the police officer was found to be guilty of misconduct.” This was true even of the most serious category of complaint: instances in which a member of the black community was shot by a police officer. “[D]uring the time I was president of the NAACP, and before and since,” Holmes continued, “I know of no instance where a shooting was ruled other than justifiable.”²⁵ Attorney Holmes was not alone. Asked by the Commission on Civil Rights whether he had during his three years at the head of the department, “disciplined any policeman for brutality or rough treatment or discourteous treatment of individuals,” Chief Wagner was compelled to admit that he “[did] not recollect of any.”²⁶

While the testimony before the Commission on Civil Rights dealt specifically with the 1960s, numerous examples of police brutality were chronicled in the *Call and Post* during the decades prior. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the 1960s represented an apex of police violence and misconduct, as such. On the contrary, Wagner’s predecessor as Chief of Police, Frank Story, had such a poor reputation among black Clevelanders that his forced resignation at the end of 1962, “sounded a joyful note for many thousands of Cleveland citizens who have demanded he be fired for his announced policies with respect to the treatment of Negroes by police,” as an article in

²⁵ Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966, 513-515.

²⁶ Ibid., 588.

the *Call and Post* put it.²⁷ Story had earned his reputation earlier in his career when, as an Inspector in charge of the detective bureau, he provided the men he supervised with a troubling bit of advise for dealing with black people. “The only way to keep those niggers in line,” Story told his detectives, “is to whip their heads.” Although he was, “publicly reprimanded” by the then Mayor and Police Chief after several black city councilors protested, neither Story’s comment nor the nakedly racist antipathy of black people it exposed disqualified him from later becoming Chief.²⁸ So reviled was Story by the end of his tenure—which, not incidentally, was occasioned by “two police killings of Negroes which created national and international renown for Cleveland as a ‘city of Police Brutality’”—that Wagner’s ascension to Chief was heralded in a *Call and Post* headline as the, “End of Police Brutality,” in Cleveland.²⁹ That sentiment would quickly prove unduly optimistic, with the longstanding racism, hostility, and anti-black violence of the CPD enduring the transition of leadership at the top of the department.

Even though the National Guard troops distinguished themselves as professionals

²⁷ Bob Williams, “Chief Story Retires; See End of Police Brutality,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 5, 1963, 1, 9A.

²⁸ Bob Williams, “Let’s Refresh Chief Story’s Memory: Ex-Chief Matowitz Called Him on Carpet for His Order ‘To Whip Ni . . . rs Heads,’” *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 16, 1961, 1, 2A. Story’s directive dates back to 1942. The original coverage appears on the front page of the October 10, 1942 edition of the *Call and Post*. The quote resurfaced in 1961 when a committee of black leaders, including *Call and Post* editor and publisher, William O. Walker, who also publicly objected to Story’s comments in 1942, brought their concerns about police brutality to Mayor Anthony Celebreeze following the shooting death of Albert Rugley by plainclothes CPD detective Theodore Hospodar at a party Rugley attended at the home of his cousin. Although witnesses at the party insisted the shooting was unprovoked, and claimed that Hospodar and his partner had failed to identify themselves as police when they crashed the party sometime around 3:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 18, 1961, police prosecutor, Richard H. Matia, who conducted the internal investigation of the shooting for the CPD, found Hospodar’s use of his fire arm justifiable, and ruled Rugley’s murder a justifiable homicide. In an article burning with indignation, Bob Williams of the *Call and Post* noted that for the twenty-year period from 1941 to 1961 there was, “not a single case on record where a cop has used his service revolver or other firearms, and [been judged to have] improperly taken a life.” See, Bob Williams, “Policeman Crashes Party, Slays Guest—Killing Called ‘Justifiable,’” *Cleveland Call and Post*, November 25, 1961, 1.

²⁹ Bob Williams, “Chief Story Retires; See End of Police Brutality,” 9A.

in comparison with CPD officers during the assault on the Townes family and throughout the course of their deployment during the uprising, several accounts of courtesy shown to black Clevelanders, and a reported assault, tarnish the overall record, and suggest that, while the guardsmen were undoubtedly better trained, and the discipline of the National Guard was more rigorously maintained, attitudes of individual guardsmen were not necessarily more enlightened than those of CPD officers. David Hayward was one Hough resident upset by the behavior and attitude displayed by several, apparently bored, guardsmen whom he encountered, “after everything got sorta quelled down.” The guardsmen, Hayward testified:

were playing with their forty-fives and crooking them back and forth. … I was coming down the street and I was sort of shook, you know[?] So I stopped and I asked, “What are you fellas doing?” “Boy,” he [the guardsman] said, “I wish something would start cause I want to shoot me somebody.”

At that, Hayward, “got a little peeved,” reminding the guardsmen that they were, “sent here to protect people and try and quiet this thing down.” The guardsmen then, “started passing bottles around and to one another,” Hayward testified. “[T]hey asked me to have a drink, and I said no.”³⁰

For his part, Franklin Phillips had a still more contentious run in with National Guard troops several weeks into their tour. Phillips reported being accosted by a combination of Cleveland police and guardsmen on July 29. “I was punched and beaten and cursed at,” Phillips, who planned to file a complaint with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, reported to the *Call and Post*. The trouble started, he said, after he joined a crowd of onlookers watching a squabble outside a bar. The scene also attracted the

³⁰ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 116-117.

attention of CPD officers and National Guard troops. While others in the crowd fled, Phillips, who, “hadn’t done anything,” stayed put. A guardsman approached and told him, “N[igger] you are the cause of me being here now.” Phillips was subsequently “pummeled and beaten by both guardsmen and police,” who then made him stand facing a wall with his arms splayed. Afraid that his tormentors would make good on their threat to, “shoot me if I looked back,” Phillips remained against the wall until, “men from the bar came over to tell me they had all gone away.”³¹

While the behavior of the guardsmen involved in these examples is deplorable, there is little evidence to suggest that a culture of anti-black racism such as infected the CPD was present in the operations of the Ohio National Guard. Individual guardsmen clearly held racist views, and in at least one case violently attacked a black person, however, such conduct obviously violated the professional standard otherwise maintained by the Guard during its deployment in Cleveland. These episodes of misconduct, in other words, are notable for their aberrance. By contrast, the racist hostility and violent aggression of CPD officers during the first three days of the uprising was very much in line with longstanding practices that were, by turns, explicitly prescribed or tacitly promoted by departmental leadership. In such a climate, any CPD officer inclined to act on racist animosity through violent or discriminatory behavior had reason to feel secure that doing so would not endanger his career or otherwise result in negative consequences.

The local branch of the NAACP, which had sought redress for police brutality, discriminatory law enforcement, and other manifestations of racism within the ranks of

³¹ Bob Williams, “Abused, Threatened; Charges Police, Guards,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 6, 1966, 12B.

the CPD for several decades, was again compelled to action by the misconduct of police officers during the early days of the uprising. Obviously limited in what they could accomplish given the congenial working relationship Wagner enjoyed with Locher and McCormick, as well as the distance the Mayor maintained between himself and Cleveland's black community, the NAACP nonetheless released a statement calling on Locher to sack the Safety Director, "in view of the inability of the Police Department to realistically understand the grievances and sensitivity of the Negro community." Branch president, Reverend Donald Jacobs, urged that Locher take two additional steps as corrective action, including replacing McCormick with a black man, and increasing the number of black officers on the police force. In a terse response, Locher reiterated his, "complete confidence," in McCormick and the oversight of the CPD he provided.³²

Rather than deal forthrightly with the objections to police misconduct raised by the NAACP and other community groups, or meaningfully address the myriad concerns regarding inadequate housing, job opportunities, food, recreational facilities, and city services that Hough residents continually brought to Locher's attention during his time in office, the authorities in Cleveland worked instead to reframe the official interpretation of the unrest. On Thursday officials advanced the suggestion that the disturbance they were combating was not, as they first thought, random lawlessness resulting from a

³² "Fire McCormick, NAACP Asks," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 21, 1966, 9; "Fire McCormick, Locher is Told," *Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, A4; Walter Rugaber, "Trouble Persists in Hough Section," *New York Times*, July 21, 1966, 18. In asking that the CPD add more black police officers, the NAACP was repeating a perennial request that had not born much fruit. Of the 2021 members of the police force in October of 1965, a mere 133 were black, accounting for just 6.5% of the force. It is worth remembering that black people made up more than 34% of Cleveland's population in 1965. Beyond the lack of overall representation on the force, the overwhelming majority of black police officers languished at the rank of patrolman, accounting for 120 of the 133. Only two black officers had achieved advanced rank. Both were Sergeants. The remaining eleven black officers were policewomen. See, *Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966*, 511-512.

spontaneous outburst of frustration. Instead, members of city government claimed to see evidence that, “there was some form of organization,” as Chief Wagner put it, working to direct the uprising.³³ The Safety Director was more specific. Citing unnamed “extremist groups” who he claimed orchestrated the rebellious actions of a sizable segment of teenagers, McCormick claimed knowledge of a “plan to stir up trouble in the community and create unrest.” Altogether, McCormick said, “200 to 300 persons are causing the problem.” Forming that group were people he described as “young offsprings that are very difficult to control,” joined by, “adults who thrive on disorder . . .” Although he would not identify the adult leadership he said was responsible for fomenting and maintaining the uprising, McCormick offered assurances that they were under surveillance by the CPD subversive unit led by Sergeant John Ungvary, and that arrests would be made as soon as the police collected enough evidence.³⁴

James Stanton, president of the city council, who added his voice to the growing chorus on Thursday, was the first to offer anything approximating evidence to back up his assertion that the uprising was “definitely” organized. Even so, Stanton could only point to two examples of what he called “selectivity in the fire bombings and the looting,” to substantiate his charge. Based on the flawed premise that “with selectivity there had to be organization,” Stanton’s argument was further betrayed by the anecdotes he offered to support it. Among the businesses ransacked by looters and destroyed by fires were two white-owned establishments standing undisturbed, side by side on Hough Avenue. Unable to make sense of what apparently struck him as an exceptional circumstance,

³³ “Wagner Says Rioting Appears to Be More Organized,” *Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, A4.

³⁴ Walter Rugaber, “Trouble Persists in Hough Section,” 18. No such arrests were ever made.

Stanton asked the business owners why they had been spared, learning by their replies that one had remained on good terms with his customers during his thirty years in business, while the other was safeguarded by the presence of several black families living in the apartments above his storefront. Stanton then discovered a business he identified as black-owned that had been firebombed. He was told the owner had charged inflated prices.³⁵

Rather than demonstrate the “selectivity” he claimed as proof that the uprising was organized, Stanton’s chosen examples simply revealed the unremarkable fact that, instead of wreaking indiscriminate havoc as the authorities and press initially claimed, participants in the uprising were guided by rational decisions based on a clear understanding of the conditions of their lives. As the preceding discussion of the relationships between merchants and customers makes clear, Hough residents were especially aggrieved by business owners whose practices were exploitative, and participants in the uprising took the opportunity to put as many such merchants as possible out of business. In confusing rational decision making with preplanned “selectivity,” Stanton did little more than expose his own reductive view of Hough residents as people incapable of discerning the difference between their friends and their enemies, and acting on the basis of that knowledge in their own best interests. Such views clearly grated at many Hough residents, including Dennis Hilliard, who affirmed in testimony before the Citizens’ Committee that, “people are not dumb to the fact that these [merchants] are living off us” Asked whether some kind of guidance was necessary

³⁵ “Riots Planned, Says Stanton,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 7.

to direct the actions of those who looted or burned stores during the uprising, Hilliary was clear: “Look at it like this, because we are not dumb … we know what’s going on, who do you need to tell you anything?”³⁶

Where Wagner, McCormick, and Stanton had been tentative, vague, or bumbling in their initial attempts to shift the official narrative about the uprising, one member of the local press was decidedly more strident. Clevelanders woke up on Friday morning to learn that what they had initially been told was lawlessness was instead, “a ‘hate whitey’ revolution,” that had been, “plotted and predicted for many months.” “At first,” the front-page article appearing under a banner headline spanning all seven columns of the *Plain Dealer* continued:

the stunned city tried to accept the blazing buildings and looted stores as the work of roving, unorganized gangs, a spontaneous outburst of racial unrest. But no longer are thoughtful officials accepting the view that the sporadic fires and the hit-and-burn tactics of faceless arsonists are based on the impulsive urges of wild, free-wheeling bands of Negro youths.³⁷

Despite the initial bombast, the article, written by Doris O’Donnell, quickly retreated to repeating Stanton’s backward claim about “selectivity” and Wagner’s suspicion that the false alarm calls on Wednesday and Thursday nights, which diluted the effectiveness of police and fire department resources by spreading them too thin, indicated that the unrest was organized. Adding Bertram Gardner’s contention that, “there’s a fringe element in the streets, and they’re fighting for control of the streets,” as well as his solution: “They’ve got to be removed,” the article then devolved into a muddle of unattributed police opinion and unsubstantiated street-corner rumor. Interspersed were comments from Cleveland’s representative in the U.S. Congress, Michael Feighan, for whom the,

³⁶ *Cleveland Citizens’ Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 34, 37.

³⁷ Doris O’Donnell, “Rioters Follow Pattern: Burn, Run,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 1.

“shooting and killing and throwing fire bombs on the streets,” which he attributed to, “the snipers,” suggested, “training in firearms and Molotov cocktails.” The article also teased readers with the claim that, “intelligence information gathered over a period of months by the police department, federal agencies and City Hall points to certain groups and certain individuals as the suspected plotters,” although city officials were not “naming names or making arrests of ring leaders,” until they could build an “airtight criminal case.” Having aroused the fears of her white readership, O’Donnell closed her article with a few clues about the identity of Gardner’s “fringe element on the streets,” who conducted the, “training in firearms and Molotov cocktails,” that so troubled Feighan, and were determined by city authorities to be the “suspected plotters.” These final details were fragmentary, with only enough specific information to effectively deliver another injection of menace. An unidentified man described as, “close to a black nationalist cause,” was said to have reported that, “the names of policemen were on ‘hate-whitey’ lists,” while “others” admitted the existence of, “arsenals of guns, of pistol ranges in Geauga County, of drilling boys, of teaching them how to use weapons, make fire bombs out of jugs and gasoline, and to cope with mob dispersal methods.”³⁸

The closing passages of O’Donnell’s article aimed at more than shifting the narrative of the uprising from spontaneous lawlessness to planned attack, taking the further step of caricaturing Cleveland’s black nationalist organizations as proponents of aggressive violence who were motivated by a hatred of whites to orchestrate the uprising, and implicating them as responsible for the ensuing death and destruction. With the frame

³⁸ Ibid., 1, 8.

thus constructed, city authorities moved quickly to hang it around their preferred target. At a press conference later on Friday, Wagner identified the JFK House as a, “fire bomb training school.” In making the charge, the police chief could produce no more evidence than Doris O’Donnell offered in her article, stating only that the CPD had, “had the the JFK House under observation for some time,” and providing the flaccid assurance that, “we are satisfied that the stuff emanates from there.”³⁹ The lack of evidence prompted a stern rebuke from Reverend Charles Rawlings of the Council of Churches of Greater Cleveland, a white ally who helped the JFK House raise operating funds when a depleted treasury (the center was funded entirely by voluntary contributions) had forced it to close temporarily earlier in the year. Rawlings challenged Wagner to produce “very substantial facts to document his accusations,” and cautioned that “if six months of investigation by the Cleveland Police Department has not yet produced evidence, Chief Wagner should use extreme caution in making statements about the house.” Wagner’s assertion also drew a flat denial from Lewis Robinson, head of the JFK House, who called the the claim an, “outright lie.”⁴⁰

In helping to frame the JFK House as the organizing force behind the mayhem, O’Donnell’s article seemingly served several masters simultaneously. Most obviously, the article deflected the focus of responsibility away from the Locher administration at a crucial time. By Wednesday, even allies of the administration had begun to lay blame squarely at Locher’s door. A front-page editorial in the otherwise supportive *Cleveland*

³⁹ Doris O’Donnell, “Chief Calls JFK House School for Arsonists,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 23, 1966, 1; Wally Guenther and Dick McLaughlin, “Fires Blamed on ‘Bomb School’,” *Cleveland Press*, July 22, 1966, 1. Interestingly, though both articles mention the same press conference, only O’Donnell’s article mentions the JFK House by name.

⁴⁰ “Robinson Denies JFK House Conducted Fire Bomb School,” *Cleveland Press*, July 23, 1966, 2.

Press listed the long-unmet need for housing, as well as the “filth, crime, unemployment, and poverty,” of Hough as causal factors in the fomenting the unrest, and declared forthrightly that, “the mayor—and only the mayor—can rally the forces needed to make Hough a decent, livable part of Cleveland.”⁴¹ Locher heard much the same thing from several members of the black community who served on the advisory committee for an urban renewal project that was supposed to revitalize the eastern end of Hough. In a meeting with the group on Thursday morning, the Mayor was berated by Hough residents who saw the uprising as a consequence of his inability to advance the project to rehabilitate housing and make other long-promised and badly-needed quality-of-life improvements, despite spending some \$7 million since initiating the project six years earlier.⁴² Similarly, O’Donnell’s article helped to staunch potential criticism of the CPD and its brutal conduct during the first three nights of the uprising, especially since Lewis Robinson was, at that point, one of the few members of the black community to publicly criticize the conduct of CPD officers in the press.

More than protecting Cleveland officialdom, however, the unattributed information O’Donnell included at the end of her article appears intended not only to discredit the JFK House (indeed, she did not mention the group by name until the next day), but, more broadly, to malign black nationalism and other militant expressions of the struggle for black liberation that were rooted in self-determination, as violent, extremist, hateful, and dangerous. In so doing, available evidence indicates that O’Donnell was

⁴¹ “Only the Mayor Can Bring About Cure for Hough, *Cleveland Press*, July 20, 1966, 1.

⁴² “Tears, Curses Mark Riot Answer Pleas,” *Cleveland Press*, July 21, 1966, C8. See also, Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1797-1990*, 167.

directly and willingly aiding the FBI. The thrust of O'Donnell's article dovetailed precisely with the stated goals of the counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) the FBI would officially launch against what it described as "black nationalist hate groups" in August of 1967.⁴³ According to the letter initiating the program that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sent to the Special Agents in Charge of twenty-three field offices, Cleveland's among them:

the purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters . . .⁴⁴

Such groups, the letter further instructed, "must be exposed to public scrutiny." The exposure might be accomplished, "through the cooperation of established local news media contacts," the letter continued, provided that, "the targeted group is disrupted, ridiculed, or discredited through the publicity and not merely publicized."⁴⁵

Doris O'Donnell had proved herself a cooperative media contact for the FBI's Cleveland field office in the past, had, in fact, written articles in April of 1966 attempting to discredit the JFK House immediately after the FBI caught wind of the fundraising appeal made to white suburbanites by Reverend Rawlings on the center's behalf. The decoded transcript of an "urgent" radio transmission sent on April 21, 1966 from the Cleveland field office to Hoover seeking the authority to, "furnish lead information," to O'Donnell in the hope of disrupting the fundraising by besmirching the JFK House,

⁴³ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. *Final Report, Book III: COINTELPRO: The FBI's Covert Action Programs Against American Citizens*, 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1976, 20-21.

⁴⁴ Letter, Director, FBI to SAC, Albany, et al., August 25, 1967, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM BLACK NATIONALIST – HATE GROUPS, Bureau File 100-448006.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

identifies her by name and employer as a journalist, “who has been used in [the] counterintelligence program in [the] past[,] and whose reliability and discretion [are] assured.”⁴⁶ Although there is no similar record concerning the article O’Donnell wrote in an effort to establish a link of fear between the black nationalist orientation of the JFK House and the Hough uprising, her inclusion of certain details—including the reports of, “arsenals of guns, of pistol ranges in Geauga County, of drilling boys, of teaching them how to use weapons, make fire bombs out of jugs and gasoline, and to cope with mob dispersal methods,” all of which she attributed to “others”—indicates access to information contained in FBI files.⁴⁷ Moreover, coming, as it did, more than a year in advance of the formal announcement of the FBI initiative, O’Donnell’s article and the subsequent framing of the JFK House it engendered would seem to indicate that every major aspect of the COINTELPRO directed against black nationalist organizations was operative well before 1967. Although it insinuated through O’Donnell that the surveillance and investigation of the JFK House was a response to anti-white hatred and violent tendencies attributed to its leadership, the FBI had actually begun tracking Lewis Robinson, Harrel Jones, Albert Ware, and several other men who formed and ran the center roughly six months before the JFK House opened, after Robinson announced his

⁴⁶ Radio message, SAC, Cleveland to Director, FBI, April 21, 1966, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM, INTERNAL SECURITY, DISRUPTION OF HATE GROUPS, Bureau File 157-1624. A copy of this document is labeled Figure C.1 and appears in Appendix C.

⁴⁷ The FBI file on MERC contains numerous references to a rifle range on a farm outside Cleveland that was eventually identified as the property of Lawrence Dozier. The farm was actually located in Ashtabula County, though there was some initial confusion on this point among FBI sources since the property is near the border with Geauga County. Likewise, confidential informants attributed plans to establish a drill team to Lewis Robinson, and instructions for making molotov cocktails and handling fire arms to Harrel Jones and Albert Ware. See, for example, Letterhead Memorandum, SAC, Cleveland to Director, FBI, July 2, 1965, MEDGAR EVERE RIFLE CLUB, CLEVELAND, OHIO, Bureau File 157-1624; Report, SA Charles A. Harvey, Cleveland, April 23, 1965, MEDGAR EVERE RIFLE CLUB, Bureau File 157-1624.

intention to establish the Medgar Evers Rifle Club (MERC) to defend civil rights protestors from violent white mobs when the CPD declined to do so in April of 1964.⁴⁸

The question of arming for self defense, regarded as an aspect of the “new thrust” of the civil rights movement that America in 1966 was learning to call Black Power, actually had its roots deep in the history of black political struggle.⁴⁹ In the post-World War II period, however, with the acceptance of nonviolent direct action as the appropriate form of black protest, armed self defense was seen as a threat by many in the liberal civil rights coalition, and considered a danger to national security by white conservatives. Even so, Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X, the two highest-profile advocates of armed self defense in the early 1960s, found a receptive audience for their messages in urban black communities, including Cleveland. In fact, Robinson planned the announcement of MERC to coincide with the arrival of Malcolm X in Cleveland to deliver his “The Ballot or the Bullet” speech at a Cleveland CORE rally of some 3000 people hosted by the Cory Methodist Church in Glenville on April 3, 1964.⁵⁰ While the timing of Robinson’s announcement clearly expressed local solidarity with Malcolm’s message, the intention to form MERC also seems to have resulted from Robinson’s alliance with RAM, itself a

⁴⁸ Teletype, SAC, Cleveland to Director, FBI, April 5, 1964, MEDGAR EVERE CLUB, CLEVELAND, OHIO, Bureau File 157-1624. A copy of this document is labeled Figure C.2 and appears in Appendix C. A more detailed account of the announcement of MERC and the subsequent rifle club activity is provided in chapter two.

⁴⁹ While not the earliest such reference, it is worth noting the remarkable similarity in the attitude expressed by Ida B. Wells in *Southern Horrors*, her exposé of lynching published in 1892. “The lesson,” that Wells’s investigation of racial violence had made clear to her, and which, she advised, “every Afro American should ponder well, is that a Winchester Rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give.” See, Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 70.

⁵⁰ *The Making of a Man*, 78; See also, “Louis Lomax - Malcolm X Speeches At CORE Rally Shake Up the City,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 11, 1964, 1, 3A.

consequence of his relationship with Don Freeman dating to 1962.⁵¹ The formation of rifle clubs appears as the third item on RAM's "12 Point Program," drafted in 1964.⁵² Further, when Robison announced the rifle club in Cleveland, he reported also notifying "'Detroit' and 'Chigaco'" both of which had RAM affiliates that worked in sympathy if not coordination with the RAM cadre in Cleveland, and divulged plans to meet with RAM-allied UHURU in Detroit.⁵³ Robinson subsequently made several trips to Detroit during the summer and fall of 1964, meeting with black militants, including James and Grace Lee Boggs, as well as Richard Henry of GOAL, who, in July of 1964, formed the GOAL rifle club (known to the FBI as the Detroit branch of MERC), which was subsequently reorganized and renamed the Fox and Wolf Hunt Club (an homage to Malcolm's analysis of the two-party system) after a contingent of Detroiters with ties to RAM, including General Baker, Rolland Snellings (Askia Ture), Charles Simmons, and John H. Jackson, joined the group.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Don Freeman, interview by author, Cleveland, Ohio, June 24, 2011. Robinson may not have been a member of RAM. If not, he would certainly qualify as a fellow traveler. He and Freeman collaborated on protests throughout the early 1960s, and Robinson operated within the RAM orbit. Freeman also credited Robinson with helping him secure a location for meetings of the Afro American Institute, which, according to Freeman, served as the RAM cadre in Cleveland, when Freeman founded it in 1962.

⁵² "The 12 Point Program of RAM (Revolutionary Action Movement), 1964," The Black Power Movement, Part 3: Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996 (microfilm), reel 1, folder Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford), Writing, 1964, 0274-0288. According to the document: "The rifle clubs will be made up of local veterans and other people from community. The purpose of the rifle club is to develop a black militia capable of protecting the black community. This militia would work with the liberation army and would serve as a base for the establishment of a community government."

⁵³ *The Making of a Man*, 78; "Rifle Club Forming Here 'to Protect' Rights Drive," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 5, 1964, 9A.

⁵⁴ Letterhead Memorandum, SAC, Detroit to Director, FBI, April 27, 1964, MEDGAR EVERSON RIFLE CLUB, DTROIT, MICHIGAN, Bureau File 157-1624; Letterhead Memorandum, SAC, Cleveland to Director, FBI, August 24, 1964, MEDGAR EVERSON RIFLE CLUB, Bureau File, 157-1624; Letterhead Memorandum, SAC, Detroit to Director, FBI, January 7, 1965, REVOLUTIONARY ACTION MOVEMENT, DETROIT, MICHIGAN, Bureau File 157-1624. A note in the file indicates the FBI changed the classification of MERC on October 7, 1964. The three-digit prefix of the renumbered file (100-442379) suggests that the FBI by then considered the MERC a matter of domestic security as opposed to one of civil unrest as it initially indicated with the original file number (157-1624).

This militant lineage, and the dread specter of Negroes-with-guns that it raised, made the JFK House an excellent scapegoat for the Hough uprising, despite the fact that all of the FBI's sources consulted on the matter independently agreed that while they observed members of the JFK House leadership in Hough, they, "did not see them take an actual part in the disturbance or play a leading role in the riots." One of the sources was no less an authority than Sergeant Ungvary, who admitted to the FBI that, "there was no evidence that members of the JFK House or their leaders planned, instigated and [sic] executed any disturbances in the Hough riot."⁵⁵ By positioning the community center as the force behind the violence of the uprising, officials in Cleveland and their allies in the press succeeded in obfuscating the fact that police brutality was the source of the worst, and deadliest, violence during the first three days. They also stoked the fears of many white Clevelanders and inflamed the racist antipathies of several others. In so doing, the campaign to shift the narrative of the uprising by falsely implicating the JFK House helped provoke the final acts of violence—both of which were committed by white vigilantes—on the last two nights of the uprising.

As was true of Wednesday night, the unrest on Thursday night was distinguished by a rash of fires. An abandoned, three-story apartment building on E. 77th Street between Lexington and Hough Avenues was the first to be burned in a pre-dusk blaze. Firemen responding to the scene at 7:45 p.m. reported that someone had, "poured gasoline in every room on the ground floor," before lighting the match.⁵⁶ That fire was

⁵⁵ Report, SA Thomas J. O'Hara, Jr., Cleveland, September 26, 1966, MEDGAR EVERE RIFLE CLUB, Bureau File 157-1624.

⁵⁶ "Darkness Brings New Fires to End Hough Rioting Lull," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1966, 1, 9.

soon followed by many more, with the frequency increasing after dark. A National Guardsman on foot patrol in Hough saw two firebombs sail into a vacant four-story apartment building on E. 79th Street around the corner from Hough Avenue. The fire grew large enough to endanger the residents of an apartment in a building next door, though not before they had time to pack up their things and evacuate. The geographic spread of the events on Thursday night revealed the continued diffusion of unrest beyond Hough, with several fires reported in Glenville on E. 110th Street north of St. Clair Avenue, and E. 126th Street at Shaw Avenue. The fires also spread south of Hough into the Central and Kinsman neighborhoods with blazes reported at E. 105th Street and Quincy Avenue, and E. 75th Street and Kinsman Road. The costliest damage of the night resulted from the fire bombing of the Union Center Supermarket located on Union Avenue at E. 120th Street, near the western edge of the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood. As had also been the case on the previous night, the rate at which fires were set on Thursday night threatened to overwhelm the resources of the fire department, with all available fire equipment on the east side engaged by 11:30 p.m., and some ninety-one fire calls received between 9:00 p.m. on Thursday and 3:00 a.m. on Friday.⁵⁷

Just as the pace of the fire setting began to slacken after 3:00 a.m., 54 year-old Samuel Winchester was getting ready to leave his home on E. 116th Street for his shift at the Grabler Manufacturing Company. On his way out, Winchester said goodbye to his wife, Sarah. Fearing the possibility that Sam could be endangered by the spread of unrest to Kinsman Road where he routinely caught the bus to work, Sarah prevailed upon him to

⁵⁷ Ibid., Wally Guenther and Dick McLaughlin, "91 Blazes Set; Shot From Car Kills Man," *Cleveland Press*, July 22, 1966, 1, A4.

instead use the bus stop on Union Avenue. Sam worried that he would have to wait too long for a bus on Union, and told his wife he would walk the quarter mile to Kinsman Road as usual. He headed out just before 3:30 a.m.. When he reached Regalia Avenue a dozen-odd doors up E. 116th from his home, Sam Winchester started across a gas station parking lot, cutting the corner to the bus stop on Kinsman Road. A man passing by in a beige Ford spotted Winchester and slowed down. The sharp crack of a gun shot rang out. Winchester fell. The bullet struck him in the left buttock and entered his lower abdomen damaging his vital organs. He was brought to the emergency room at St. Luke's hospital where, according to the county coroner, he died of internal bleeding. Before succumbing to his wounds, Winchester reporting seeing a lone white man in the car from which the shot was fired. His death, the third of the uprising, was ruled a homicide.⁵⁸

Sam Winchester's murder is the most mysterious of the four committed during the uprising. He did not seem the type to make enemies, and it is unlikely that he was specifically targeted by the gunman. Winchester, "never bothered anybody," his wife lamented, grieving the sudden loss of her husband of twenty-two years. "Why did they have to kill my man?" Sam was also well regarded by his neighbors. Joseph Dublin, who lived next door to the Winchesters, described him as "a helluva likable guy," and a man who, "minded his own business. You'd call him a listening man, not a talker." To Mary Johnson, Dublin's aunt, Sam was, "a God-fearing gentleman."⁵⁹ Neither is there any evidence to even hint that Winchester participated in the uprising, while his age, work

⁵⁸ Wally Guenther and Dick McLaughlin, "91 Blazes Set; Shot From Car Kills Man"; "Shot From Car; 'Likeable Guy' Assassin's Victim," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 23, 1966, 11.

⁵⁹ "Shot From Car; 'Likeable Guy' Assassin's Victim".

schedule, the distance he lived from the epicenter of the unrest, and the fact that he had been at home before leaving for work further militate against that possibility. Were it not for the ongoing uprising, Winchester's murder might be reasonably regarded as a random act.

However, given the context of the uprising which had by its fourth night spread to an area near Winchester's home when a number of plate-glass storefront windows along Union Avenue were smashed and the Union Center Supermarket was firebombed, and the pronouncements of Cleveland officials who had recently begun a campaign to pin the blame for such acts on people they described as anti-white, violence prone, black extremists, the killing was most likely deliberate. Moreover, John McCormick's commentary about unnamed "extremist groups" on Wednesday also contained an ominous warning that a "strong feeling" was brewing among members of Cleveland's white population. Although they had not yet acted on those feelings, McCormick said, "when they do it will be a most serious problem."⁶⁰ The area where Winchester was killed straddled the western edge of the solidly-black Mt. Pleasant neighborhood to the east, and the mostly-white neighborhoods of Union-Miles Park to the west and Woodland Hills to the north. In that combustible climate, with the unrest approaching a boundary between black and white neighborhoods, it is entirely possible that the gunman in the beige Ford was acting from his own "strong feeling" when he shot Samuel Winchester.

Whereas the identity of the gunman who shot Winchester, his reasons for doing so, and their possible connection to the ongoing uprising remain clouded by a

⁶⁰ Walter Rugaber, "Trouble Persists in Hough Section".

degree of uncertainty, there is no doubt that the group of white men who committed the final murder of the uprising, on the fifth night of unrest, were motivated by vigilante zeal as participants in an armed patrol of Murray Hill, a predominantly Italian-American neighborhood separated from Hough and Glenville by the campus of Case Western Reserve University. Following the publication of Doris O'Donnell's inflammatory article in Friday morning's *Plain Dealer* and Chief Wagner's unsubstantiated "fire bomb training school" comments at a press conference later that day, both of which stoked fears of an ill-defined black nationalist menace bent on violence, residents of Murray Hill convened a "secret meeting" on Friday evening to organize a band of vigilantes armed to, "protect the neighborhood in case it was invaded by rioters." Such fears were heightened when CPD Patrolmen James Burke and Jerome Oberstar, who worked a regular beat on Murray Hill, went door to door on Friday spreading rumors about sniper attacks and a possible plot to blow up water mains in the area, and counseling residents to "govern themselves accordingly." "By Friday everybody was carrying a gun," conceded Warren LaRiche, the 28 year-old Murray Hill resident and member of the vigilante group who shot Benoris Toney in the face at close range with a 12-gauge shotgun just after 2:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 23. Murray Hill, LaRiche continued, "was an armed camp."⁶¹

So much so, in fact, that the vigilante group could well be viewed as utterly

⁶¹ Wally Guenther, "Guard Unit to Stay on Daily Basis," *Cleveland Press*, July 25, 1966, 1, A4; Terence Sheridan, "Sniper Rumors Rampant in Little Italy, Trial is Told," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 16, 1967, 6. Bob Williams, "Toney's Widow Bitter: Charges 'Mississippi Justice,'" *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 25, 1967, 1, 16A; Dick Feagler, "Fear Seized Murray Hill, Killing Defendant Claims," *Cleveland Press*, July 27, 1966, A4. Beyond these immediate catalysts, Murray Hill had a history of organizing armed groups to resist what they interpreted as encroachment into their neighborhood by black Clevelanders, as they had done in 1964 when a mob of Murray Hill residents violently repelled a civil rights demonstration urging school desegregation. See chapter 2. For more on the parochial views of Murray Hill residents as they relate to the killing of Benoris Toney during the Hough uprising, see, Todd M. Michney, "Race, Violence, and Urban Territoriality: Cleveland's Little Italy and the 1966 Hough Uprising," *Journal of Urban History* 32, no. 3 (2006): 404-428.

unnecessary. Days earlier, the National Guard had widened its patrols to include the area where LaRiche and his accomplices were keeping watch when they shot Toney. Moreover, reports of a sniper on the roof of the Dougherty Lumber Company at Euclid Avenue between E. 120th and E. 121st Streets brought a flood of CPD officers and guardsmen into the area around midnight. Despite an exhaustive search conducted with the aid of Sergeant Lemieux's helicopter, no snipers were located. Shortly thereafter, two young white men, neither of whom lived in or near Murray Hill, injured themselves when one of them dropped the shotgun he was carrying, discharging it accidentally. Rumor spread that the men had been shot by snipers. Despite the protection afforded by the heavy presence of police and guardsmen, the Murray Hill vigilantes were keyed for action and maintained their patrols.⁶²

At the same time, Benoris Toney, 29 years old, was a mile-and-a-half away on Lamont Avenue, at home with his wife, Nareace, and their five sleeping sons. Toney got a phone call from his friend and co-worker, William Childs, who was stuck at work on the West side of Cleveland and hoping that Toney could give him a ride back to his home on the East side. Toney demurred, not eager to hit the streets at what had been the time of peak intensity during the previous nights of unrest. When Childs called again, Toney, against his better judgement and the wishes of his wife, relented. "My man is stranded," Toney explained to Nareace as he headed out shortly after 12:30 a.m.. She thought about going with him for a minute, "but something said not to," she later recalled. Toney made it to the West side, picked up Childs at the Munray Products Company where both men

⁶² "Shooting Ends Hough Calm: Father of 5 Wounded in Auto, is 'Critical,'" *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 23, 1966, 1; "Man is Shot on Euclid as Violence Spreads," *Cleveland Press*, July 23, 1966, 1; "Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard," Appendix 2.

worked, and delivered him home to Glenville sometime around 2:00 a.m.. He left Childs's house and drove south on Lakeview Road. When he turned right on Euclid Avenue, a scant two miles were all that remained between Benoris Toney and a safe return to his family. He never made it.⁶³

For reasons that are unclear in the available sources, shortly before 2:30 a.m. Toney pulled off Euclid into the parking lot of the Dougherty Lumber Company where he was quickly confronted by three white men in a 1959 Ford. Warren LaRiche, his shotgun at the ready, sat in the back of the car. His next-door neighbor, Patsy Sabetta, was driving. Along for the ride was 17 year-old Michael Jacobucci. The only certainty about Benoris Toney's encounter with this contingent of the Murray Hill vigilante squad is that Warren LaRiche fired two blasts at Toney. The shots hit Toney in the face, wounding him critically. LaRiche would subsequently claim at his trial for second-degree murder that he killed Toney in self defense. According to LaRiche's account, he, Sabetta, and Jacobucci had, "stopped at the Red Head Gas Station ... for a bottle of pop," before going home.⁶⁴ Presumably the trio watched Benoris Toney pull his car into the lumber yard, which was directly across Coltman Road from the gas station. Their suspicions aroused by the presence of a black man on the periphery of Murray Hill, they followed Toney's car into the lumber yard parking lot (LaRiche explained at his trial that they thought Toney was there to burn the place down) where LaRiche claimed he asked Toney, "Hey, fellow, what are you doing here?" According to LaRiche's version of events, Toney then backed his

⁶³ Robert G. McGruder, "Slain Negro's Widow Asks: 'Why Do the Good Always Get Hurt?,'" *Cleveland Plain Dealer* July 24, 1966, 4A; Terence Sheridan, "Sniper Rumors Rampant in Little Italy, Trial is Told"; "One Freed: Hung Jury Leaves Riot Death Unsettled, *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 25, 1967, 1.

⁶⁴ Dick Feagler, "Fear Seized Murray Hill, Killing Defendant Claims."

car alongside Sabetta's, aimed a pistol at LaRiche's head, and told him something to the effect of, "White man, you are dead." A "terrified" LaRiche raised his shotgun and fired. For reasons he did not explain, LaRiche then jumped out of Sabetta's car and began to run away. He stopped to fire a second shot, he told the court, because he heard someone yell, "he's got a gun," and thought Toney was coming after him.⁶⁵

Although his story was sufficient to see him acquitted by an all-white jury (though only after a prior, also all-white, jury was declared hung by the presiding judge), certain details contradict accounts provided by the police immediately after the shooting took place, while photographs of Toney's car taken after the shooting raise additional doubts about the veracity of LaRiche's version of events. For example, both the initial police accounts and the photographs of Toney's car suggest that the standoff LaRiche described did not take place. Instead, the police reported that Sabetta's car drove up along the right side of Toney's vehicle, and that LaRiche's fired his first blast through the closed passenger's-side window. Figure D.7 shows that window shattered, with a section that would have been at the center of the blast completely blown out, as well as pockmarks around the door frame likely caused by the spray of the buckshot. Figure D.8 shows the driver's side of Toney's vehicle, with the front window rolled down and no visible damage to any part of the car on that side.⁶⁶ Taken together, the photographs support the claim that LaRiche fired at the closed window on the passenger's side of Toney's car, making it difficult to imagine how the conversation LaRiche related could have taken place. Toney did have a gun on him at the time, though it again seems unlikely that he

⁶⁵ "Directed Not Guilty Verdict Asked in Shotgun Slaying," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 18, 1967, 14.

⁶⁶ See Appendix D.

would have chosen to draw on LaRiche from behind a closed window if he intended to kill him. The gun, a .38 caliber revolver, was discovered under Toney's slumped body by police after he had been shot. It had not been fired.⁶⁷ The matter of Toney's gun raises another apparent inconsistency in LaRiche's testimony insofar as his decision to fire a second shot is concerned. Had Toney immediately raised his gun and threatened LaRiche's life, LaRiche could hardly have been surprised by the shouts of "he's got a gun," that he claimed were the reason he shot Toney a second time. Indeed, had the encounter unfolded as LaRiche described, he would obviously have known that Toney had a gun well before he fled from Sabetta's car. Likewise, if the shouts of, "he's got a gun," which LaRiche testified came after he fired the first shot, did catch him unaware, it is reasonable to conclude that Toney's gun was not visible to any of the men until after he was shot, in which case he could not have been threatening to shoot LaRiche with it.

Benoris Toney's murder devastated his wife, leaving her at a loss to, "understand why it happened to him." "I didn't want any of this violence," she continued. Neither did her husband, she added. "He just worked and took care of us. Both of us worked. We were thinking of buying a house."⁶⁸ With the life she and Benoris had been building in Cleveland now destroyed, Nareace Toney planned to return to Memphis to bury her husband and live with her children. Ultimately, she changed her mind about relocating, preferring to stay in Cleveland after Benoris's funeral in Memphis, which meant she was in town to see LaRiche's trial. "It looked like Mississippi justice from the very

⁶⁷ "Man is Shot on Euclid as Violence Spreads," 2; Terence Sheridan, "All-White Jury Hung in Hough Riot Death," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 22, 1967, 1.

⁶⁸ Robert G. McGruder, "Slain Negro's Widow Asks: 'Why Do the Good Always Get Hurt?'"

beginning,” she said.

I sat at that trial daily, all day, waiting, hoping that, somehow justice would come out of it to remove some of the load in my heart. Day after day I began to get the impression that my husband was on trial, not the men accused of killing him. I couldn’t help think, if it was right, what would have happened if my husband had been with two other men and killed a white man under the exact [same] circumstances.⁶⁹

The facts and circumstances of Benoris Toney’s murder, when taken in concert with those that preceded it earlier in the week, mean several things with respect to the violence committed during the Hough uprising, the right to armed self defense, and the relationship between the two. First, and most obviously, the four murders and the other serious injures from gunfire were all perpetrated by white people against black people. Moreover, there is ample evidence in each case to conclude that the violence carried out by whites against blacks was wanton rather than accidental or defensive, with white CPD officers often indistinguishable from the many other “special” police and vigilantes with whom they collectively formed a mob of heavily-armed white men that numbered well into the hundreds on any given night. And more than a few members of the posse seemed to relish the opportunity to carry firearms into the black community where they might use them at any opportunity, including those of their own making. These basic facts bear emphasizing because they stand as a direct challenge not only to the claims of Cleveland authorities that the violence of the Hough was plotted and carried out by black “extremists,” but the corresponding popular conception (subsequently ossified into the conventional wisdom) that black people were the agents of violence in riot after riot across the country, while the police and National Guard acted strictly to preserve law and

⁶⁹ Bob Williams, “Toney’s Widow Bitter: Charges ‘Mississippi Justice’”; “Hough Widow Will Not Leave Despite Memories of Tragedy,” *Cleveland Press*, July 26, 1966, A4.

order. Early scholarship of the “ghetto riots” did little to undermine this essentially backward perspective, routinely using the term “violence” as shorthand for the arson and looting that black people undertook, creating a false equivalence between physical brutality up to and including murder, and property destruction.⁷⁰ Even when the violent conduct of police and guardsmen was admitted, it was presented as “retaliatory actions to reassert dominance” following the initial, violent transgressions of blacks. This “retaliatory” police violence was itself attributed to the eventual breakdown of police discipline, “under the strain of widespread rioting,” which then allowed “many lawless acts initiated by lower-echelon police officers.”⁷¹ As the foregoing account of police misconduct during the Hough uprising makes clear, however, violence, at least in Cleveland, was the initial mode of police engagement with the black community, including women, young children, and other non-participants, and it was absolutely not limited to the “lower-echelon” of the CPD.

Likewise, the killing of Benoris Toney, and Warren LaRiche’s acquittal on second-degree murder charges, illuminate the racialized double standard of armed self defense that prevailed in Cleveland. Whereas the previous efforts of Lewis Robinson,

⁷⁰ The Final Report of the Kerner Commission set the standard in this regard. Indeed, one struggles to find the word violence used in any other sense in the report. Whereas “violence” in this sense is projected as a central truth of the uprisings, the report is markedly more circumspect in its discussion of police conduct, wherein the question of police violence is framed as a matter of the perceptions of black people, to wit: “Negroes firmly believe that police brutality and harassment occur repeatedly in Negro neighborhoods.” The, “true extent of excessive and unjustified use of force [by police],” the report continues, “is difficult to determine.” See, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968, 302. David Boesel and Peter H. Rossi, eds., *Cities Under Siege: An Anatomy of the Ghetto Riots, 1964-1968* (New York: Basic Books, 1971) provides another example. The paradigm of looting-and-burning-as-violence proved durable even when the “violence” was seen in a more expansive light, as in, Robert M. Fogelson, *Violence as Protest: A Study of Riots and Ghettos* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971).

⁷¹ Louis C. Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots and Others: The Faces of Disorder in 1967,” *Journal of Peace Research* 5, no. 2 (1968): 116-131.

Harrel Jones, and Albert Ware to organize an armed group for the purpose of self defense were attacked as illegitimate as soon as the plans were announced, LaRiche, and the “armed camp” on Murray Hill generally, were encouraged by local law enforcement officers, and accepted as acting within the American tradition of armed self defense. At his trial, LaRiche’s attorney went so far as to compare, “the vigilante actions of the Little Italy area to American pioneers protecting kith and kin.”⁷² Claims to the right of armed self defense made by members of the black community—who had faced actual violence from white mobs on Murray Hill during the school desegregation campaign—were, by contrast, regarded as not only criminal, but subversive (the second amendment apparently notwithstanding in this case), drawing the immediate scrutiny of the FBI, and the CPD Special Investigations unit. For its part, the Locher administration moved quickly to harass the group, firing Lewis Robinson from his job as a city housing inspector within days of his announcement of the initial meeting of the Medgar Evers Rifle Club.⁷³ That legacy of armed self defense was then used to help scapegoat the JFK House as the organizing force behind the violence of the Hough uprising, despite the fact that the only violence committed by anyone claiming to act in self defense was the murder of Benoris Toney by the white vigilantes of Murray Hill.

The rumors of black invasion that spurred the men of Murray Hill to arm themselves not only proved wrong in their specifics, but were also contrary to the overall decline in the severity of the unrest during the fifth night of the uprising. As opposed to

⁷² Terence Sheridan, “All-White Jury Hung in Hough Riot Death.”

⁷³ “Rifle Club Organizer Suspended by City,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 10, 1964, 1; “Rifle Club Organizer Fired From City Job,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 14, 1964, 27.

the dozens of fires set during each of the previous four nights of unrest, no more than twenty fires were reported throughout the entire city between 6:00 p.m. and midnight on Friday night. None of those blazes resulted from firebombs, though one fire ignited in the early morning hours of Saturday had been deliberately set in an abandoned house near the western edge of Hough. Five other vacant houses were also burned. Additionally, a crowd gathered at the intersection of E. 79th Street and Hough Avenue, the initial flashpoint of the uprising, at 7:30 p.m. was significantly smaller than those that had gathered earlier in the week, with perhaps thirty people on hand, some of whom, “jeered police and guardsmen,” who had ordered a black man to move his car out of the intersection.⁷⁴ In the judgement of the National Guard, these conditions constituted a, “decided improvement in the situation.”⁷⁵

Despite this apparent advance, the *Plain Dealer* in a hyperbolic front-page editorial entitled “Crack Down Harder,” warned readers, “This can be the worst weekend in Cleveland history unless more drastic action is take to end the Hough violence.” The paper urged Locher to, “act decisively now,” by enforcing a curfew and bringing in additional National Guard troops, police, and firemen to, “do the job against the hit-and-run arsonists, the snipers, the youthful hoodlums, [and] the organized terrorists.”⁷⁶ Doris O’Donnell’s column detailing Chief Wagner’s charges against the JFK House appeared directly below the editorial as if to clarify for readers just who these purveyors of violence were.

⁷⁴ “Shooting Ends Hough Calm: Father of 5 Wounded in Auto, Is ‘Critical’”; “Man is Shot on Euclid as Violence Spreads.”

⁷⁵ “Report on the Role of the Ohio National Guard,” 11.

⁷⁶ “Crack Down Harder,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 23, 1966, 1.

Indeed, even as the unrest wound down, attacks on the JFK House, the black nationalist politics of its leaders, and its purported role as a catalyst in the violence of the uprising, were ratcheted up. A contingent of National Guard troops and CPD officers raided the center at 10:30 p.m. on Saturday night, on the pretext of looking for Lewis Robinson and his wife Beth who were subsequently found at home and rearrested on charges unrelated to the uprising that dated to November 1965. The case against the Robinsons, who along with twenty-four others were initially arrested at a dance hosted by the Socialist Workers Party in Cleveland, had been dismissed on July 12, 1966.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that they were executing a warrant that, by Saturday, was two days old, on a case that had already been settled and had no connection to the uprising, the CPD and National Guard marshaled a considerable force to apprehend the Robinsons. “It was just after eleven-thirty when I went downstairs,” Lewis Robinson recalled. “Bruce was asleep. Beth was nursing Ari and sat with me while I drank a can of beer.”

Suddenly we heard heavy knocking at both the front and side doors while simultaneously a police lieutenant and five police came into the house. I turned on the front porch light and saw what appeared to be an army lined up on the street. There were four jeeps, each with .30 caliber machine guns and ammunition belts ready to fire. Each jeep contained two soldiers and a policeman. In front of my house were three police cars with three cops in each of them. The considerable display of law enforcement attracted the attention of the neighborhood. “My neighbors,” Robinson said, “... had come out and were standing silently on the street.”⁷⁸ It would appear, given the dubious legality of the charges, that the spectacle was the point. Unable to link Robinson to the uprising, the Law Department and CPD nonetheless devised a rouse to arrest the JFK House leader during the unrest.

⁷⁷ “Robinson, Wife and Others Rearrested,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 25, 1966, 6.

⁷⁸ *The Making of a Man*, 188.

As Robinson's lawyer, Stanley Tolliver, pointed out, the warrant also gave the CPD and National Guard, "an excuse to raid and search the JFK House," which they did over the weekend.⁷⁹ While a police official would only admit the initial raid on Saturday, Lewis Robinson contended that a subsequent raid was conducted the following night, when the center had been closed. According to Robinson, National Guard troops, "broke down [partition] walls in the basement," and bombed it with tear gas. "It was the same type of crystal gas they use in Vietnam in tunnels," Robinson said. "Everytime [sic] you go through there it stirs up and becomes activated again."⁸⁰ The following Tuesday, the city did something it had scarcely attempted in Hough for several years—enforced the housing code. Citing the JFK House with several violations of health and safety standards, the city ordered the youth center to remain closed.⁸¹ When Robinson organized the JFK youth into a cleanup crew to fix the problems initially cited, the police sanitation unit came up with eight additional violations, and gave Robinson one week to fix them. The next day, city housing inspectors added thirty-three more.⁸² Robinson tried again to have the center inspected only to encounter still more bureaucratic tangles, informed by the head of the police sanitation unit that he would need to apply for a permit to reopen the JFK House. In order to secure the permit, Robinson was told, the center would have

⁷⁹ Wally Guenther, "Guard Unit to Stay on Daily Basis," A4; "Raids Protested by JFK House," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 25, 1966, 6.

⁸⁰ Lewis Robinson, interview by John Britton, transcript of a tape recording, Cleveland, Ohio, November 15, 1967, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., 43.

⁸¹ "JFK House Shut as Health Peril," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 27, 1966, 1.

⁸² "Police Again Close Reopened JFK House," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 29, 1966, 4; "JFK House Check May Be Tomorrow," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 31, 1966, 10; "Police Foil Bid To Reopen JFK Center," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 2, 1966, 8; "Fire Inspectors List 8 Flaws at JFK House," *Cleveland Press*, August 3, 1966; "8 Violations Added to JFK House List," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 4, 1966, 59; "Wiring, Toilets Cited: JFK House Faces 33 More Violations," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 5, 1966.

to pass a battery of inspections by the city's building and fire departments, and the police sanitation unit.⁸³ Although Robinson apparently continued his efforts to overcome the regulatory thicket, the JFK House never reopened.

Despite their victory, city authorities were not content to rest on their laurels, making arrangements to receive the property that housed the JFK House from its owner who claimed he could find neither a buyer nor tenants for the building. Originally, the city council suggested the former location of the JFK House, "probably would be restored and used either as housing for families displaced by urban renewal, or it might be turned over to the Police Athletic League (PAL) for use as a youth center."⁸⁴ Despite the rosy projection, the city decided only six months later to raze the building instead. On the day it was torn down, a defiant Robinson declared: "You can destroy this building, but you can't destroy the idea of black unity and black pride that was taught here."⁸⁵

The campaign to close the JFK House proceeded hand-in-glove with the official investigation of the causes of the Hough uprising conducted by a special session of the Cuyahoga County Grand Jury, led by former *Cleveland Press* editor, Louis Seltzer. Endeavoring to lend the gravitas of a formal investigation to the unsubstantiated charges of Chief Wagner, Safety Director McCormick, City Council President Stanton, and Mayor Locher, that the looting, arson, and vandalism during the uprising was planned, the grand jury concluded from its week-long investigation that, "the outbreak of

⁸³ "JFK House Will Need Permit," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 10, 1966, 2.

⁸⁴ "Council Readies Legislation: Owner Offers City JFK House," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 4, 1966, 1. Robinson smelled a rat in this arrangement, insisting that he offered to buy the building for \$2000.

⁸⁵ "As It Is Torn Down, Robinson Eulogizes JFK House's Purpose," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 28, 1967, 37.

lawlessness and disorder was both organized, precipitated, and exploited by a relatively small group of trained and disciplined professionals at this business.” Although it, too, tried mightily, the grand jury failed to prove its allegation, instead falling back on James Stanton’s stale claim of “selectivity” as evidence. The “overall pattern for firebombing and destruction,” the jury’s report said, was, “highly selective.” Not only that, but, “the targets were plainly agreed upon,” and, “certain places were identified to be hit,” while others, “were similarly spared.” Although it presented them as individual points on a numbered list, the grand jury could not quite hide the fact that in making these charges, it was merely saying the same thing in three slightly different ways.⁸⁶

Going further, the report then blamed the JFK House leadership by name. Lewis Robinson was identified as a member of “black nationalist clubs,” and accused of, “inciting these youths [of the JFK House] to focus their hatreds and … indoctrinating them with his own vigorous philosophy of violence.” Harrelle Jones was described as, “an outright exponent of violence, a black power apostle with a bitter hatred for all whites, [and] a co-founder of the Rifle Club,” though the grand jury could point to no violent actions taken by Jones at any time. The closest they could come was to claim that he, “caused 2,000 pieces of literature to be printed and circulated, citing alleged instances of ‘police brutality.’” About Albert Ware, the grand jury could say only that he, “was not one who could have other than destructive influence upon youths either at the JFK House or elsewhere.” Relying heavily on passive voice construction, the report proceeded with its attempt to tie the JFK House to the Hough uprising, noting that:

⁸⁶ Cuyahoga County Grand Jury, “Special Grand Jury Report Relating to the Hough Riots,” August, 1966, 3, 6. A copy of this report is available in the Cleveland Public Library.

There was evidence placed before the Jury that Rifle Clubs were formed, that ammunition was purchased, and that a range was established and used, that speeches were made at JFK House advocating the need for Rifle Clubs, and that instructions were given in the use of Molotov cocktails, and how and when to throw them to obtain maximum effect.

In a final bid to discredit the center and its leaders, the grand jury played its last card, claiming that, “irrefutable evidence was shown to the effect that Robinson pledged reciprocal support to and with the Communist Party of Ohio.”⁸⁷ The link between the JFK House and the CP was, according to the grand jury, the Du Bois Club in Cleveland. The group had been infiltrated by Jesse C. Thomas, an undercover police officer who was the source for the grand jury’s allegation. Robinson admitted meeting with Du Bois Club leadership on the Thursday of the uprising at their invitation, though he denied pledging support in sworn testimony at a U.S. Senate Committee hearing.⁸⁸

Having defamed the JFK House leadership along precisely the same lines earlier pursued by Cleveland officials and the FBI (with the help of Doris O’Donnell), and with no more hard evidence than its predecessors had, the grand jury proposed several profoundly anti-democratic changes to state law that would, effectively, criminalize black resistance to injustice except, perhaps, in its most obsequious forms. In addition to redefining a riot as, “any use of force or violence, disturbing the peace, or any threat to use such force or violence … involving two or more persons,” the grand jury recommended imposing severe penalties for “inciting to riot,” “arson, or attempted arson during a riot,” and “assault against a fireman or policeman acting in the course of his

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

⁸⁸ Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Gaps in Internal Security Laws: Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws*, 90th Cong., 1st sess., May 10, 1967, 277-278.

duty.”⁸⁹

Lastly, the grand jury considered the “conditions of life prevailing in the Hough Area.” Admitting that high population density, low-quality housing, high rents, inadequate city services, poor schools, high prices for low quality food, and employment discrimination all played a role in inflaming the frustrations of Hough residents, the grand jury report then grew paternalistic, blaming the prevalence of those conditions on the “the present system of paying women for having children, frequently out of wedlock,” as well as the black migrants to Cleveland who, “frequently … find themselves bewildered and unable quickly to adjust themselves to the demands of their new surroundings . . .”

While it understood the “impatience among the negro [sic] people for the improvement of their citizenship,” the grand jury could not help but note that, “the opinion has been expressed they may be attempting to exact too much too fast for the community to bear within an arbitrarily fixed time limit.”⁹⁰

Needless to say, the grand jury’s findings were not warmly received in the Hough, or anywhere else in Cleveland’s black community. For Carl Stokes, then a state legislator, the report was a “whitewash,” that “remov[ed] the liability of the city administration as the immediate precipitating cause of the riot.” Community Relations Director Bertram Gardner averred that, “the living conditions were the things that caused the riots,” adding that the people of Hough, “didn’t need any Communists to tell them they were

⁸⁹ “Special Grand Jury Report Relating to the Hough Riots,” 12-13.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 13-15.

suffering.”⁹¹ The *Call and Post* called the report, “questionable,” in an editorial, and Daisy Craggett charged that “through this report, the real problems, issues, and solutions are hidden by a maze of clouded preconceived attitudes, notions, [and] actions.” “It was expected,” Craggett continued,

that so-called Agitators [*sic*] would be named as those who organized the violence. It was expected that the JFK House would be tied in with the outsiders[,] and that they would be condemned for rifle clubs and bomb schools. It was expected that Lewis G. Robinson, and his motives for operating the House, would be degraded. It was expected that the whole area of brutal law enforcement would be ignored ... It was expected that the release of the Murray-Hill Vigilantes would be forgotten.⁹²

In the aftermath of the uprising, while the grand jury was doing its work, black community organizations advanced their own interpretations of the unrest and its causes, as well as solutions to the most pressing problems of the black ghetto. The East Side Community Union, for example, a small group made up of a number of grassroots activists including Alice Aarons, Lathan Donald, and Carole King, among others, organized a meeting of some 75 people, evenly split between adults and youth, who together drafted a list of eight demands. The first four items on the list concerned changes to the police force, insisting “that police show more respect to community people; that they stop threatening people with guns, cursing, and racist language,” as well a call for the resignations of Chief Wager, and Safety Director McCormick, “because of their lack of understanding of the community which they are supposed to be serving.” The group also demanded the integration of the CPD, the creation of a civilian police review board,

⁹¹ “Whitewash, Says Stokes: Jury Report Praised, Belittled,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 11, 1966, 9. Not surprisingly, Locher found the report to be, “a notable service,” and praised the grand jury for having, “the guts to fix the approximate [*sic*] cause—which had been hinted at for a long time—that subversive and communist elements in our community were behind the rioting.” Locher held fast to that view even though both the FBI and U.S. Attorney General asserted there was no evidentiary basis to support it.

⁹² Daisy Craggett, “Great Expectations,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 20, 1966, 4A.

the development of a rat and roach mitigation program, the strict and immediate enforcement of housing codes, and the building of recreational facilities. Lastly, the group closed with an appeal to democratic principles that, while not avowedly black nationalist, nevertheless reflected the basic sentiments of the philosophy, with their demand that, “decisions about any government or civic program affecting the lives of the people in the ghettos, be made by the people themselves.”⁹³

In the aftermath of the uprising, Cleveland’s black community embraced a spirit of unity not much in evidence since the 1964 campaign to desegregate the schools. At a meeting at the Fellowship Baptist Church held on Sunday, July 24, “a united front and a united effort towards social peace and positive community action,” was forged, according to Baxter Hill, then the Chairman of Cleveland CORE. At the meeting, Hill said, “civic leaders both middle class and grass root [*sic*] from the Hough Area, including Black Nationalists, had reached complete agreement,” on the causes of the uprising. Of particular concern during the meeting were police brutality and, “the real problem of deprivation,” suffered by many in Hough.⁹⁴ The sense of common purpose inaugurated at that early meeting was redoubled following the release of the grand jury report. Determined that the voices, perspectives, and experiences of the black community concerning the uprising be recorded and heard, a broad cross-section of black Clevelanders, including leaders from the local chapters of the NAACP, CORE, the Urban League, the Negro Pastors’ Association, as well as the Hough Area Council, the Hough Opportunity Board, the Council of Churches, the National Association of Social Workers,

⁹³ “Community Union Meets; Issues Demand Statement,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 30, 1966, 3A.

⁹⁴ “United Effort Brings Peace,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 30, 1966, 1, 2A.

and a coterie of prominent black attorneys, organized the Citizens' Committee on the Hough Disturbance.⁹⁵ Crucially, the committee provided the people who lived and worked in Hough a forum to share their unfiltered accounts as eye-witnesses to events on the ground during the uprising—a view not presented adequately, if at all, anywhere else. As such, the committee hearings refuted the claims of the grand jury and others, including members of the press, who watched the uprising from a remove, even when they walked the streets of Hough. In so doing, the hearing testimony complicates the conventional interpretations of urban uprisings, breaking down the binary opposition according to which the uprisings were understood either from the conservative perspective as lawlessness, or the liberal perspective as frustration. Instead, the hearing testimony contextualizes the looting and burning within a broader framework of racial injustice that helped to create ghettos like Hough in the first place, and situates it alongside the political struggle of the early 1960s which sought to address economic exploitation in Hough through more acceptable means. Most importantly, though, the testimony reveals the criminal violence of police officers and white vigilantes as a central component of the unrest, exposing the fundamental role of force in maintaining the white power structure in Cleveland.

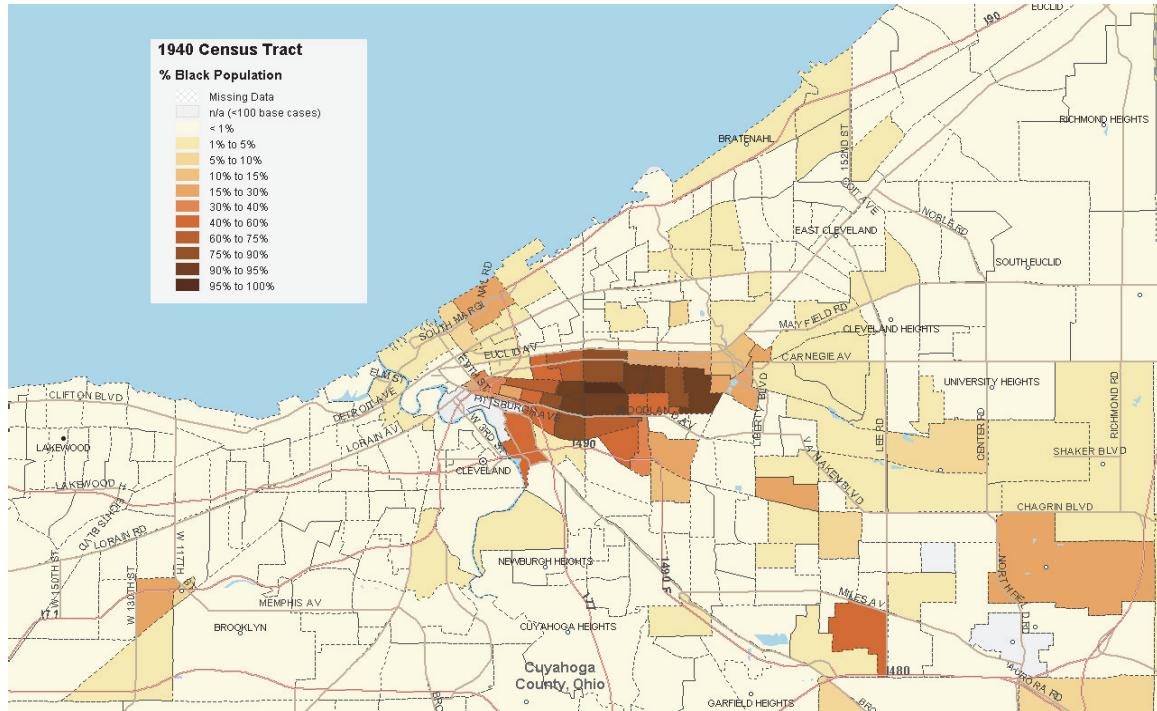
Without this perspective, the increasingly militant politics of black people in Cleveland and throughout the United States during the latter half of the 1960s, as they moved assertively to take control of their communities with ballots and bullets, is difficult to fully comprehend. Occurring weeks after James Meredith's March Against

⁹⁵ *Cleveland Citizens' Committee on Hough Disturbances Hearings*, 1.

Fear, the Hough uprising was undoubtedly of the black power moment. It was not, however, an example or expression of black power, as such. Instead, the uprising was an inchoate response to the white power structure, the interlocking operation of city and state government administrators, the police department (with the aid and support of the FBI), the white press, and the white merchants and landlords who dominated the economy of the ghetto, which together generated, maintained, excused, and enforced the system of oppression that did so much to circumscribe the living conditions endured by the majority of black people in Cleveland. By highlighting an intransigent mayor and brutal police department as the two primary forces obstructing black-led efforts to alleviate the manifold injustices plaguing black Clevelanders and their communities, the Hough uprising helped to crystallize the need for black power. A means rather than an end, black Clevelanders mobilized to seek power along two tracks in the months following the uprising. The first, essentially a project of liberal reformism, sought to use the power of a well organized black electorate to elect Carl Stokes mayor with the expectation that he would distribute the common resources of the city more equitably, and prove more responsive to the needs not only of Hough, but the broader black community in Cleveland. The second, committed to a black nationalist orientation, sought to spread black consciousness among the masses, insisted on the right of self-determination in the black ghetto, and prepared to build an armed force to defend the black community against the depredations of the CPD. Despite the differences in political outlook, the goal in each case was the liberation of the black population through control of the black community and its resources.

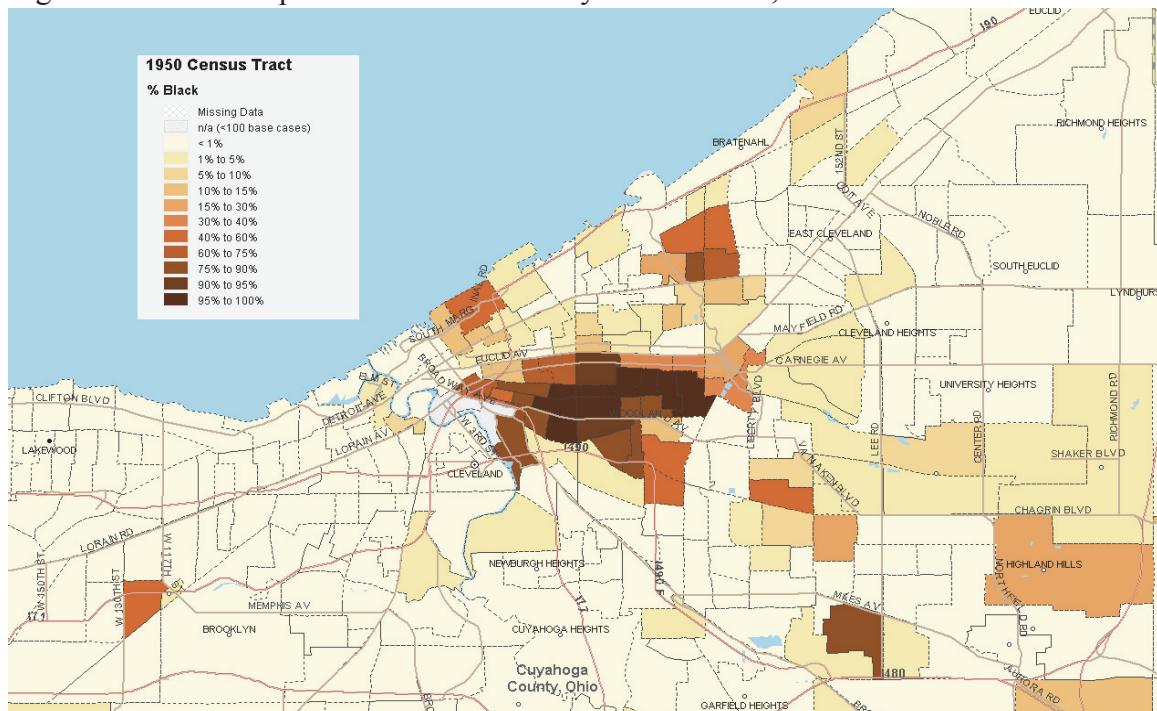
APPENDIX A
MAPS OF CLEVELAND CENSUS TRACTS

Figure A.1: Black Population of Cleveland by Census Tract, 1940



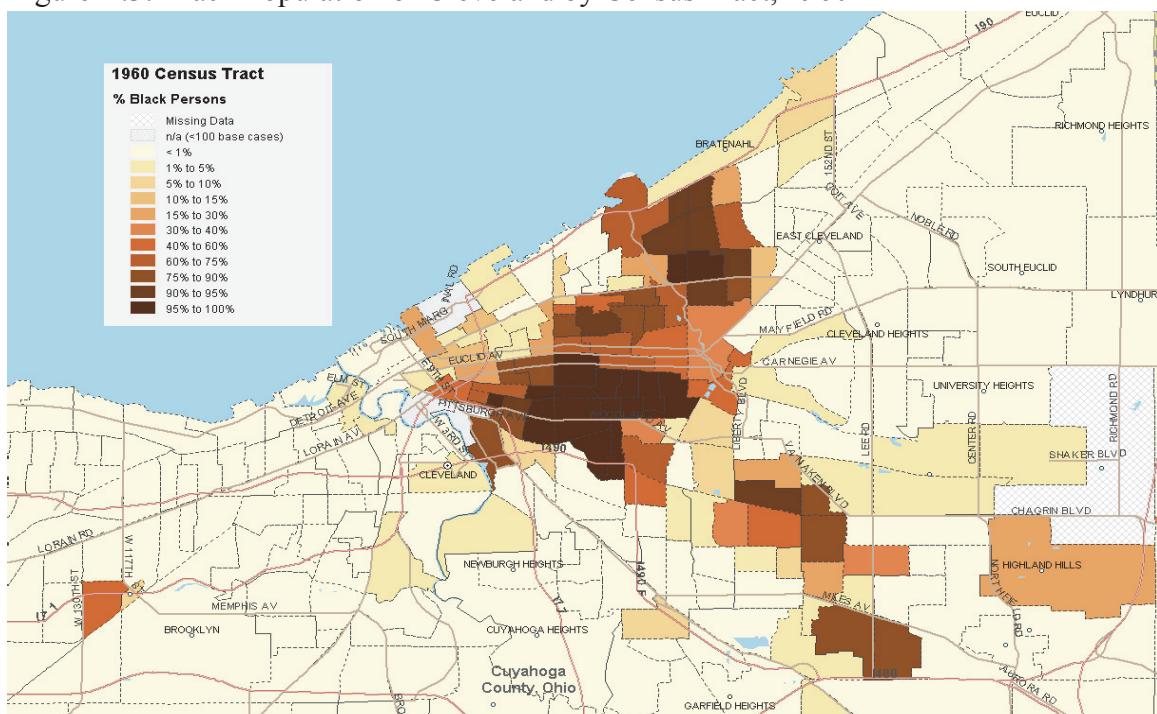
Source: Black Population, 1940. Social Explorer.

Figure A.2: Black Population of Cleveland by Census Tract, 1950



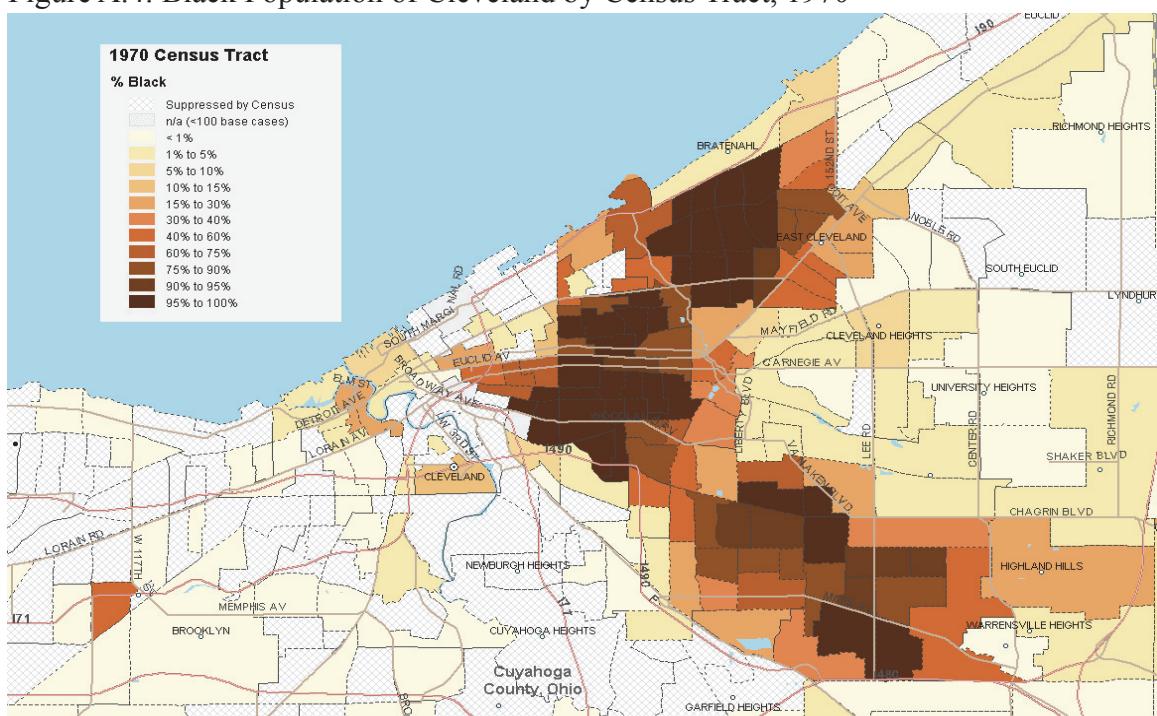
Source: Black Population, 1950. Social Explorer

Figure A.3: Black Population of Cleveland by Census Tract, 1960



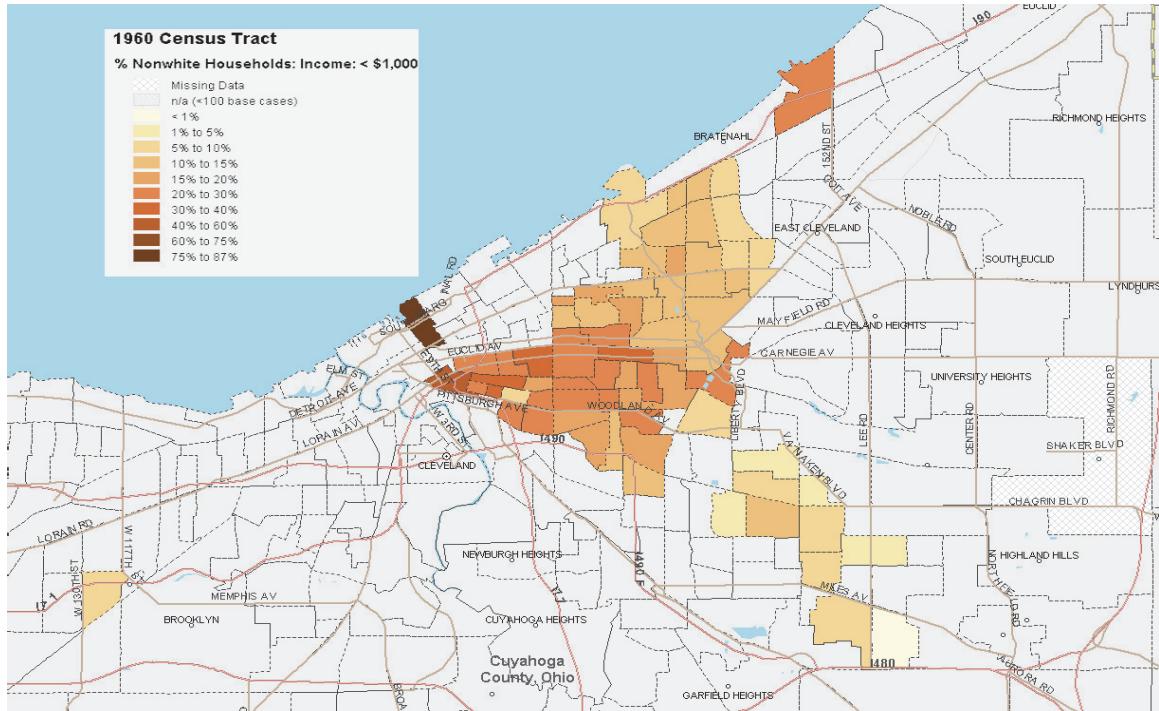
Source: Black Population, 1960. Social Explorer.

Figure A.4: Black Population of Cleveland by Census Tract, 1970



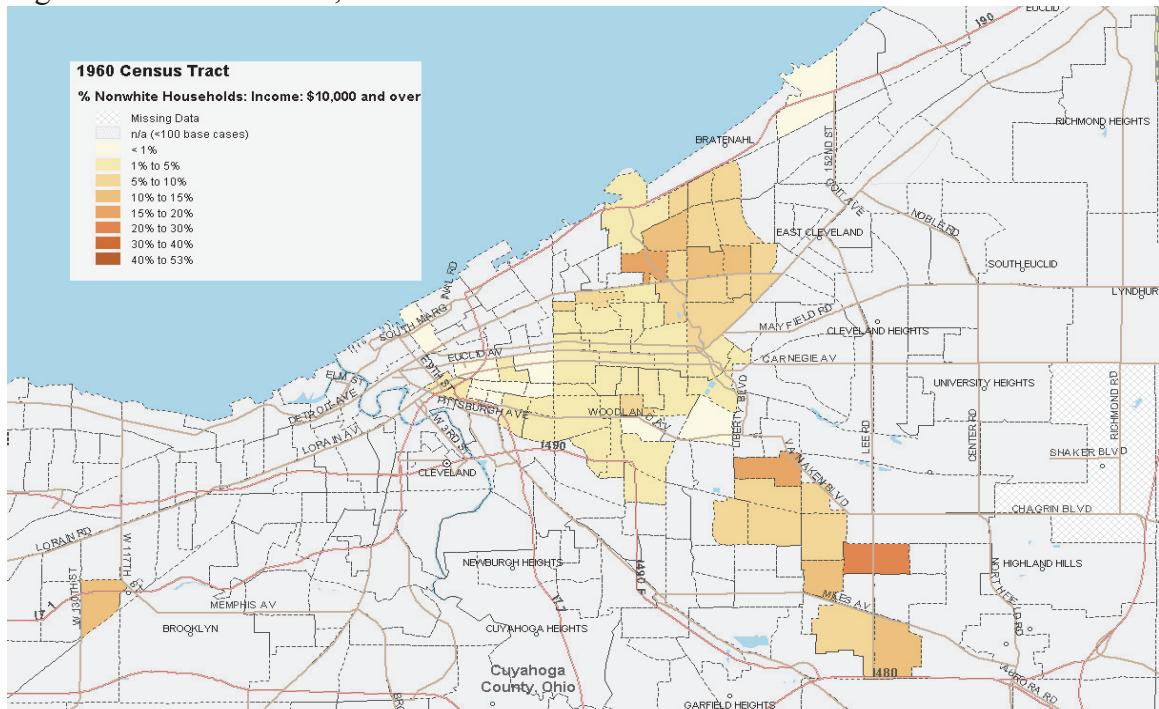
Source: Black Population, 1970. Social Explorer

Figure A.5: Black Poverty, 1960



Source: Low Income Nonwhite Households, 1960. Social Explorer.

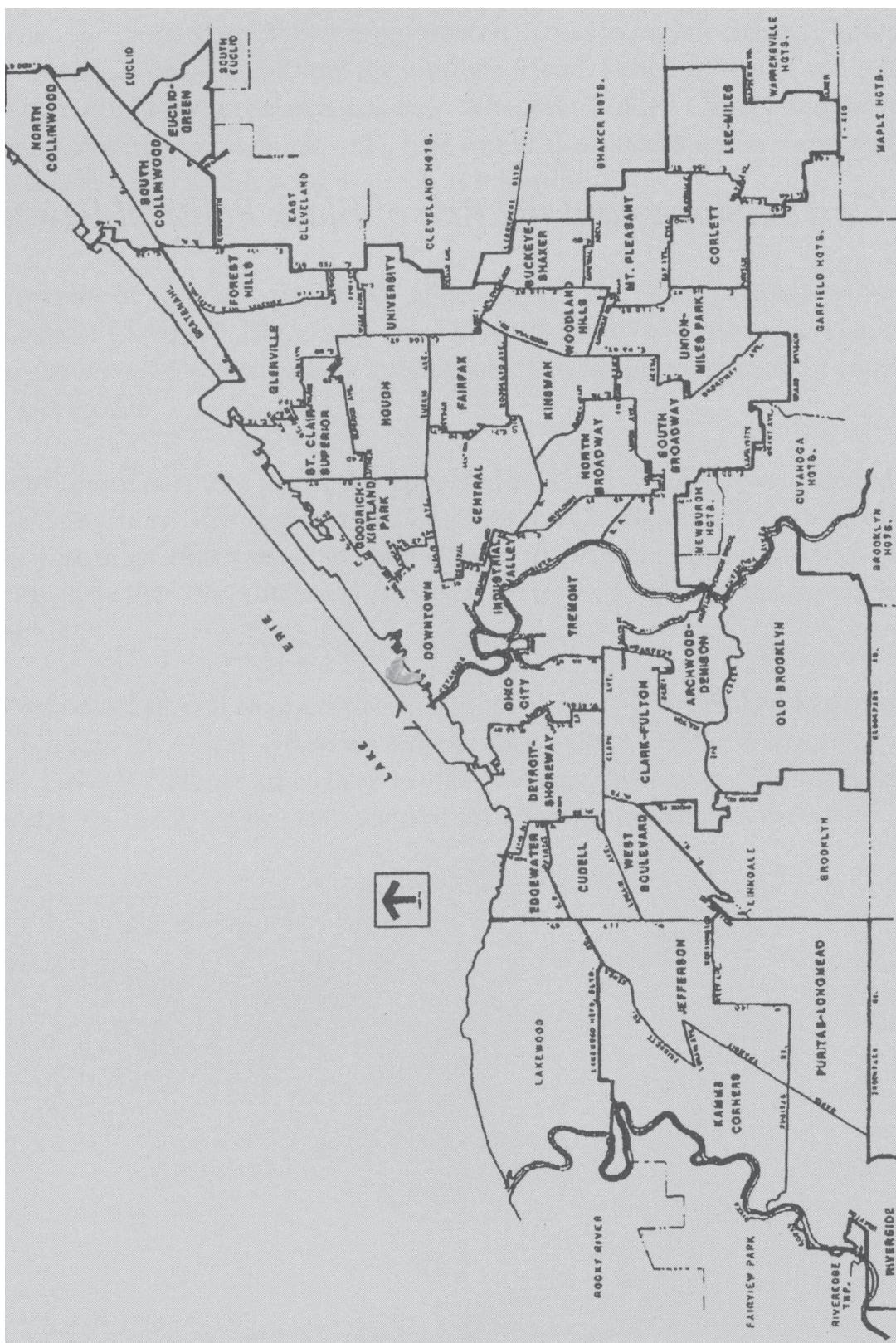
Figure A.6: Black Wealth, 1960



Source: High Income Nonwhite Households, 1960. Social Explorer.

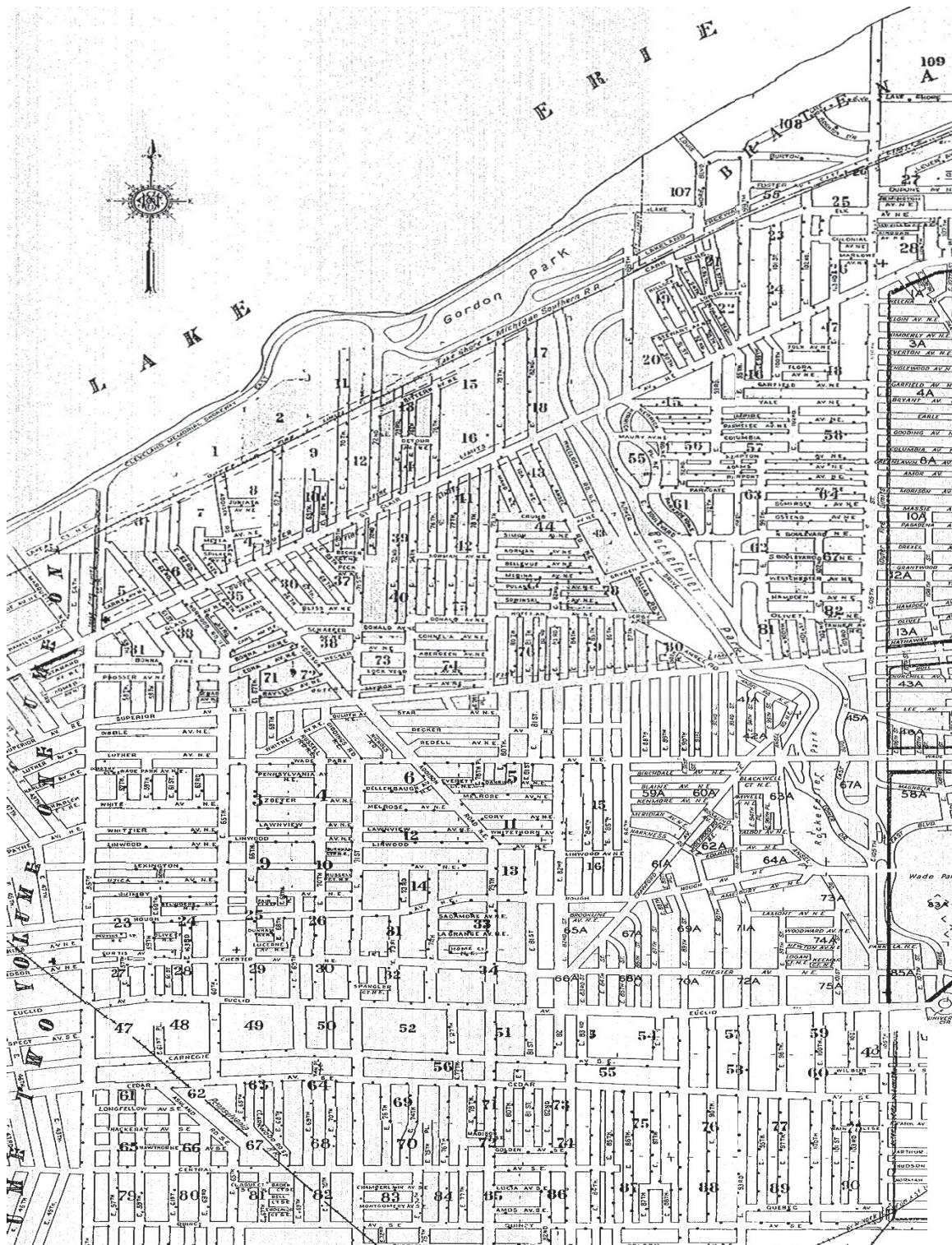
APPENDIX B
MAPS OF CLEVELAND NEIGHBORHOODS

Figure B.1: Cleveland Neighborhoods



Source: Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Figure B.2: Selected East Side Neighborhoods



Source: Composite image derived from Sanborn fire insurance maps, produced by the author.

Figure B.3: Hough Neighborhood, Close Up



Source: Composite image derived from Sanborn fire insurance maps, produced by the author.

APPENDIX C
SELECTED FBI DOCUMENTS

Figure C.1: FBI Memo April 21, 1966

NW 35881 DocId:31937636 Page 16

Tolson _____
 DeLoach _____
 Mohr _____
 Wick _____
 Casper _____
 Callahan _____
 Conrad _____
 Felt _____
 Gale _____
 Rosen _____
 Sullivan _____
 Tavel _____
 Trotter _____
 Tele. Room _____
 Holmes _____
 Conley _____

DECODED COPY

AIRGRAM CABLEGRAM RADIO TELETYPE

PAGE TWO FROM CLEVELAND 212121

IS BEING SENT TO PROTESTANT CHURCHES AND ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS TO CIVIC GROUPS IN CLEVELAND AND SUBURBS.

REV. YOUNGER AND REV. RAWLINGS ARE BOTH REGARDED AS DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCES BY THE LEGITIMATE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND HAVE BEEN MILITANTLY ACTIVE IN RACIAL DEMONSTRATIONS AND CIVIL DISORDERS IN THE CLEVELAND AREA.

LOUIS ROBINSON, AN SI SUBJECT, WAS FIRED FROM JOB WITH CITY OF CLEVELAND FOR FORMING THE MEDGAR EVERE RIFLE CLUB IN 1964, STATED PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS DEMONSTRATORS, CLAIMING POLICE WERE NOT PROTECTING THEM.

HARLLEL ROBERT JONES, OTHER LEADER OF JFK ALSO ON SI, WHO IS SOLICITING ORGANIZATIONS PERSONALLY, HAS RECENTLY DECLARED IN WYW TV TAPED INTERVIEW, NOT YET RELEASED, THAT HE IS VICE PRESIDENT OF DEACONS FOR DEFENSE, CLEVELAND, WHICH ORGANIZATION HE STATED IS ARMED TO PROTECT NEGROES AGAINST KKK AND POLICE, WHOM HE STATED ARE AGENTS OF KKK. JONES HAS PREDICTED RIOTS IN CLEVELAND IN 1966 AND STATED FIRST ONES TO SUFFER WILL BE THE "UNCLE TOM" NEGROES. YOUNGER HAS BEEN LIVING IN COMMON LAW RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMAN WHO IS PREGNANT AND

FOIA(b) 6
FOIA(b) 7C

If the intelligence contained in the above message is to be disseminated outside the Bureau, it is suggested that it be suitably paraphrased in order to protect the Bureau's cryptographic systems.

Tolson	_____
DeLoach	_____
Mohr	_____
Wick	_____
Casper	_____
Galehan	_____
Conrad	_____
Felt	_____
Gale	_____
Rosen	_____
Sullivan	_____
Teitel	_____
Trotter	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Holmes	_____
Candy	_____

DECODED COPY

AIRGRAM CABLEGRAM RADIO TELETYPE

PAGE THREE FROM CLEVELAND 212121

RE POLICE HARASSMENT OF JFK HOUSE, IN 1964, MORE THAN FIFTY BURGLARIES WERE SOLVED WITH ARREST OF YOUNG NEGROES FROM JFK HOUSE WHO CONFESSED. IN 1965, TWO YOUNG WHITE BOYS AND THEIR FATHER WERE BEATEN UP BY YOUNG NEGROES. ONE ADULT AND ABOUT FOURTEEN YOUNG NEGROES FROM JFK HOUSE WERE ARRESTED, AND ADMITTED GUILT IN SIGNED STATEMENTS. JUST RECENTLY, ALTHOUGH JFK HOUSE CLOSED, POLICE FOUND YOUNG MALE AND FEMALE MEMBERS HAD BROKEN IN AND WERE DRINKING AND ENGAGING IN IMMORAL ACTIVITIES. ALL ABOVE MATTERS HANDLED BY NEGRO POLICE OFFICERS.

BUREAU AUTHORITY REQUESTED TO FURNISH LEAD INFORMATION RE FOREGOING TO DORIS O'DONNELL, FEATURE WRITER, CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER, DAILY AND SUNDAY MORNING NEWSPAPER, WHO HAS BEEN USED IN COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM IN PAST AND WHOSE RELIABILITY AND DISCRETION ASSURED. AUTHORITY ALSO REQUESTED TO ALERT SOURCES LETA WOOD AND HAROLD CENTINI, WHO HAVE ALSO BEEN USED IN THE PAST AND WHOSE RELIABILITY AND DISCRETION IS ASSURED SO THEY MAY ALERT PROTESTANT CLERGY VIA "GRAPEVINE". CLEVELAND DIVISION BELIEVES SWIFT ACTION NECESSARY IN THIS MATTER TO

PRECCLU

If the intelligence contained in the above message is to be disseminated outside the Bureau, it is suggested that it be suitably paraphrased in order to protect the Bureau's cryptographic systems.

DECODED COPY

AIRGRAM CABLEGRAM RADIO TELETYPE

Tolson _____
DeLoach _____
Mohr _____
Wick _____
Casper _____
Callahan _____
Conrad _____
Felt _____
Gale _____
Rosen _____
Sullivan _____
Tavel _____
Trotter _____
Tele. Room _____
Holmes _____
Gandy _____

PAGE FOUR FROM CLEVELAND 212121.

PRECLUDE PLEDGES BEING MADE FOR SUPPORT OF JFK HOUSE BY
UNSUPECTING CHURCH GROUPS, IT BEING NOTED THAT LETTER
BEING CIRCULARIZED DOES NOT GIVE TRUE PICTURE OF JFK HOUSE.

RECEIVED: 6:48 PM LJT

cc: DR. SCHAPIRA

If the intelligence contained in the above message is to be disseminated outside the Bureau, it is suggested that it be suitably paraphrased in order to protect the Bureau's cryptographic systems.

Figure C.2: FBI Memo April 5, 1964

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

APR 5 1964

TELETYPE

LEVELND

6:35 PM EST DEFERRED 4-5-64 RLS

TO DIRECTOR

FROM CLEVELAND /157-NEW/

MEDGAR EVERE'S CLUB, CLEVELAND, OHIO. *Racial Matters*

Cop

LOCAL SOURCES REPORT PLANS BEING MADE TO FORM A RIFLE CLUB IN CLEVELAND TO PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS DEMONSTRATORS IF POLICE FAIL TO DO SO. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING THE CLUB WAS MADE BY LOUIS G. ROBINSON, A CITY OF CLEVELAND EMPLOYEE AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS, A SMALL LOCAL CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP. MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL EIGHT NEXT TO ORGANIZE THE GROUP.

ROBINSON ANNOUNCED THE CLUB WILL BE NAMED IN HONOR OF MEDGAR EVERE'S AND PLANS TO MEET WITH UHURU OF DETROIT. HE STATED IMPETUS TO FORM THE GROUP CAME FROM APPEARANCE OF MALCOLM X IN CLEVELAND ON APRIL THREE LAST.

CLEVELAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

SGT. JOHN J. UNGVARY, CPD, IS CONDUCTING ACTIVE INVESTIGATION OF GROUP AND STATED HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM REPORTS THE GROUP IS EXPECTING A SHIPMENT OF RIFLES. HAROLD B. WILLIAMS, A SOURCE AND LOCAL LEADER OF CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT RECENTLY HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT HIS GROUPS WOULD NEVER CALL THE RIFLE CLUB FOR ASSISTANCE.

LETTERHEAD MEMORANDUM APR 15 1964

BUREAU WILL BE KEPT ADVISED. LHM WILL BE SUBMITTED.

END

WA NHH APR 16 1964

FBI, WASH DC

TU CLR

AM 9/16/64

Mr. Tolson
Mr. Belmont
Mr. Mohr
Mr. Casper
Mr. Callahan
Mr. Conrad
Mr. Felt
Mr. Evans
Mr. Gale
Mr. Rosen
Mr. Sullivan
Mr. Tavel
Mr. Trotter
Tele. Room
Miss Holmes
Miss Gandy

APPENDIX D
SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE HOUGH UPRISING

Figure D.1: Joyce Arnett, First Casualty of the Hough Uprising



Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University.
Reproduced with permission.

Figure D.2: Wallace Kelley, Victim of a Police Shooting



Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University. Reproduced with permission.

Figure D.3: Men Patrol the Perimeter of a Burning Building



Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University.
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Figure D.4: Merchant Hangs “Soul Brother” Sign



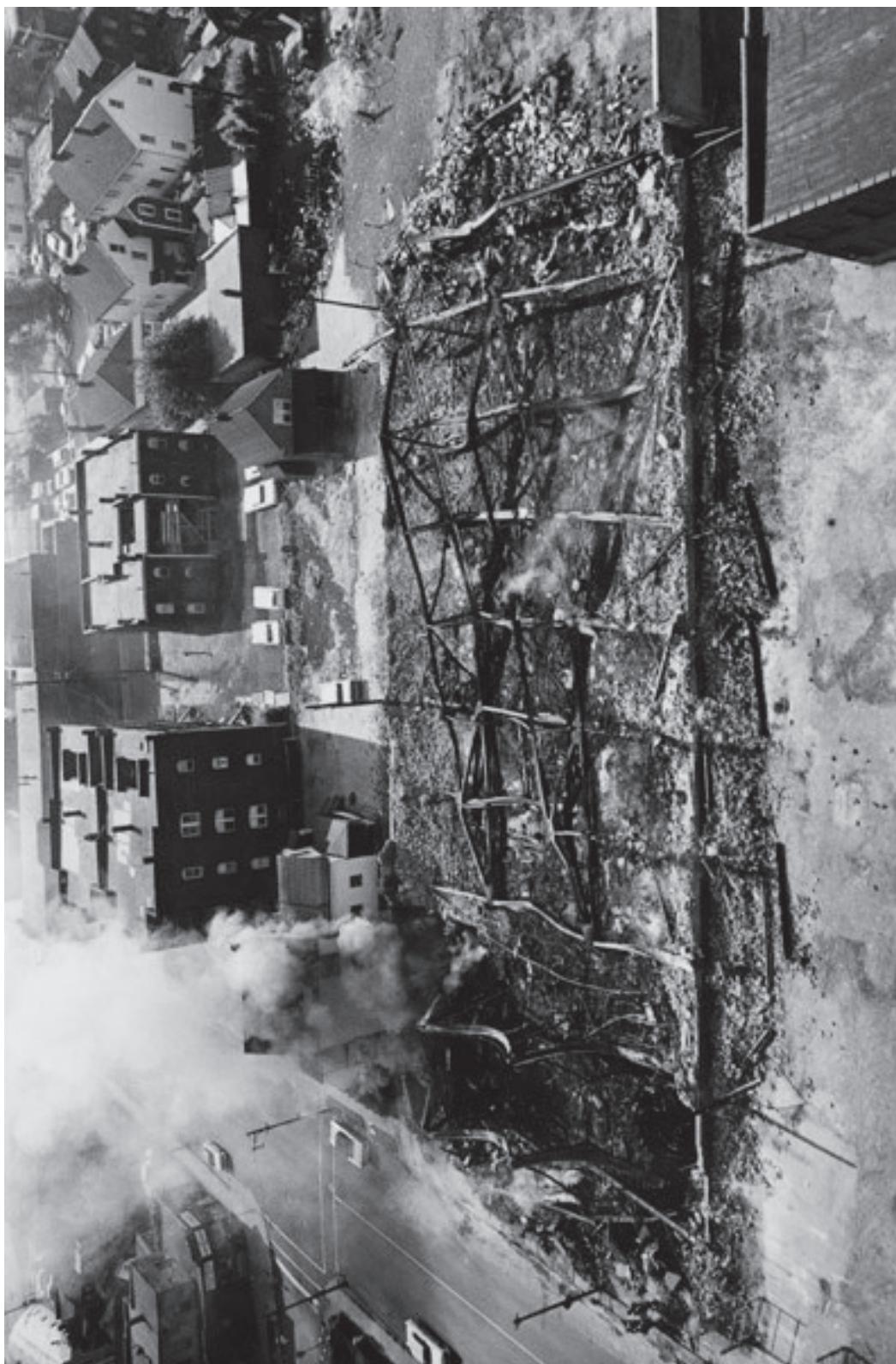
Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University.
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Figure D.5: Ernest Williams Shot by Police While Riding in Henry Townes's Car



Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University.
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Figure D.6: University Party Center Destroyed by Fire



Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University.
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Figure D.7: Benoris Toney's Car, Passenger's Side View



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Figure D.8: Benoris Toney's Car, Driver's Side View



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Figure D.9: Police Officer Confronts Harllel Jones and Others Outside JFK House



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